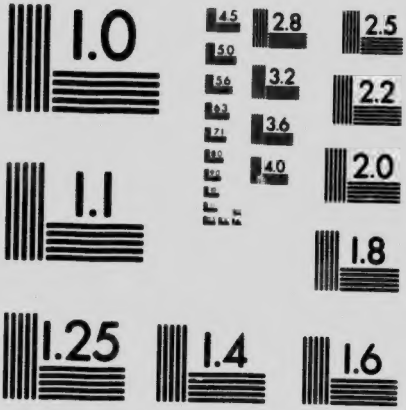

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LANGUAGE TEACHING

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THEORY AND PRACTICE OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

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THEORY AND PRACTICE

OF

LANGUAGE TEACHING

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FRENCH AND GERMAN

BY

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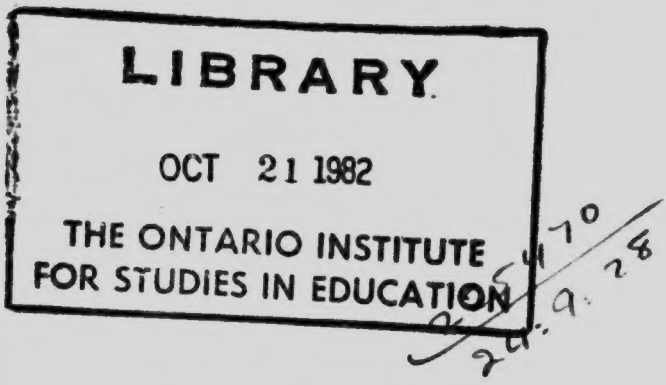

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Nerissa. What say you, then, to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

Portia. You know I say nothing to him; for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian; and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture, but, alas! who can converse with a dumb-show?

SHAKESPEARE,

Merchant of Venice, Act I, Scene II.

PRINTED IN ENGLAND.

PREFACE

I HAVE long observed that where mistaken methods of language teaching are found to be in use—and they are very widely in use—they are invariably traceable, directly or indirectly, to misconceptions with regard to the nature of language itself. The attitude usually adopted towards the teaching of languages appears to be mainly empirical; this is sufficiently obvious from the discussions which occasionally take place on the subject, which only too frequently degenerate into a wrangle regarding the results alleged to have been produced by this or that method. But the results obtained by any given method must always be a much more debatable matter than the principles on which it is founded. Moreover, the term 'method' in education should mean something more than merely a way of obtaining a desired result; it implies a *right* way of obtaining that result; in the case of language teaching, it should be based on the principles of linguistic science.

When a teacher has once come to an intelligent

comprehension of right principles, whatever is faulty in his method will correct itself sooner or later; on the other hand, to expect a teacher to apply a method successfully without having first grasped the principles on which it is founded is quite vain. For these reasons it has seemed to me clear that any book on method, if it is to be at all satisfactory, must begin with the study of linguistic phenomena from the point of view both of the linguist and the psychologist. And I have been encouraged to pursue this plan by a conviction, the outcome of considerable experience, that those methods of teaching which, from the standpoint of linguistics and psychology, appear to be the most desirable are also precisely those which, from the point of view of practical command of the language, produce the best result; or, conversely, the methods which in practice lead to the best result are also those which are most in keeping with the aims of true scholarship.

Although I have throughout pursued the plan of first laying down principles, and then showing their practical application, it has not always been possible to keep theory and practice wholly separate. Indeed, the formal division of the book into two parts was only finally decided upon after the whole nineteen chapters had been written.

In the theoretical part of the book I have supported my statements by quoting freely from the acknowledged authorities on the subject, to whose writings every student of language is of necessity heavily indebted. Part II. is based directly on my

own experience; I make no recommendation in this section of the book which I have not myself proved in practice to be sound.

I have taken my illustrations almost entirely from French and German, because these two modern languages appear at present to hold the field, and because they happen to be the two with which I am myself most familiar. If I have seemed to ignore other languages in this book, I do not mean that they should be ignored in our schools. My concern has been the main principles of language teaching, and these, once discovered, are the same for all languages.

I venture to express the hope that the book will prove useful, not only to the practical teacher and the student in training, for whom it is primarily intended, but also to persons in positions of educational responsibility, who are sometimes called upon to decide questions relating to the teaching of living languages, but whose training has left them unfamiliar with the real nature of the problems involved.

I have to express my thanks to two kind friends—Mr. Walter Ripman, Chief Inspector of Schools to London University, and Professor R. A. Williams of Queen's University, Belfast—who have been good enough to read through my manuscript before publication and have placed their unique experience and knowledge at my disposal in the most generous and handsome manner; I am further indebted to them for assisting me in the reading of the proofs at a time

when duties of another character have rendered such help peculiarly welcome. I ought to add, however, that for the views expressed in the following pages I am myself alone responsible.

E. CREAGH KITTSON

BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, FRANCE
June 1917

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PART I: THEORY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE question of the teaching of languages in schools must be regarded from two different points of view, the practical and the theoretical. From the practical point of view our only concern need be to find the method which will lead most directly to a competent command of the foreign tongue, that is, to the ability to speak it, to read it, and to write it. Theory, however, has also to be taken into account, for this reason if for no other, that right theory leads to right practice. But there are other and even more important considerations. It may reasonably be laid down that no subject and no method of teaching a subject have any claim to a place in the school curriculum unless they can be proved to be educative. Almost any form of activity in which young people engage can be educative; cricket and football are educative, none the less so because the boys who play these games are not aware that they are thereby educating themselves. But to look at the question of

language learning from the restrictedly practical and utilitarian point of view, to look upon it *merely* as an art to be acquired—though learning to speak a language undoubtedly is and always must be the acquiring of an art—would be to lay ourselves open to the charge that such work belongs strictly to technical education. Now the function of language learning in education is to give what is called linguistic training; it is also concerned with literary training, but although the two cannot in practice be kept quite separate from each other, nor indeed ought they to be, it will be convenient for our present purpose in the first place to consider the former by itself. Linguistic training means primarily training in the use of language; it also means the acquiring of right notions about the nature of language and about linguistic phenomena generally; especially, it involves an intelligent comprehension of the characteristic features of the particular language which is being studied. As far as the teaching of languages in schools is concerned, any method which does not lead to right linguistic training in this sense stands self-condemned; for it is at least as important that young people should acquire right notions about the nature of such a common human phenomenon as language as that they should acquire right notions about chemistry or physics. Consequently, in dealing with the question of method, our first business must be to arrive at a right understanding of the nature of language and of the aims and methods of linguistic science, and to lay down right principles

with regard to them, to which we can afterwards, if necessary, refer; and this is all the more desirable since the prevailing ideas on the subject, even amongst educated people, are in many cases quite false.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS LANGUAGE?

LANGUAGE in the widest sense of the term is a means of conveying our thoughts to others. In this sense there may be said to be three different forms of language: the language of gestures, speech, and writing.

Of the first mentioned much need not be said here. On the one hand there is the gesture-language in use amongst the deaf and dumb, which is a complete means of communication in itself, marked however by almost total inability to convey abstract ideas; on the other hand there are those gestures which, while they by no means supplant speech, are used in greater or less degree by almost all speakers to eke out or emphasise their meaning in conversational intercourse. Many of these latter appear to be almost universal, such as the nodding or shaking of the head to express affirmation or negation.[1] On this matter no more need be said beyond remarking that the characteristic gestures

[1] There are, however, curious exceptions: the native of Hindustan, for example, does not understand the ordinary European method of beckoning;—the palm of the extended hand must be turned downwards, while the fingers perform a kind of scooping motion.

of any people are deserving of at least some attention from the person eager to master their language.

There remain spoken language and written language. It is most important fully to realize that the latter is merely a representation of the former by means of written or printed signs. A little reflection will make this clear. Speech has been in every case anterior to writing; writing never exists independently of speech, it is always founded on speech and grows out of it as a means of symbolizing it; on the other hand, we can find many instances of spoken languages that have never been reduced to writing. Moreover, all organic changes that have ever taken place in language have first taken place in speech,[1] and philology is

[1] In some cases the pronunciation of individual words is influenced by the way in which they are spelt, the speaker preferring to follow the spelling rather than the usage of good society; this is illustrated by the attempt, e.g., to pronounce the *d* of *handkerchief*, or to make *extraordinary* a word of six syllables. These 'spelling pronunciations' (as they are called) are occasionally adopted in standard speech; examples of this in English are *false*, *fault*, which were formerly pronounced without an *l*; *fault* was so pronounced as late as the end of the eighteenth century, as in Goldsmith's lines:

> Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,
> The love he bore to learning was at fault;

and *false* is still so pronounced in Lancashire dialect.

Proper names suffer frequently in this respect, since they are likely to be *read* before they are *heard*. Thus Cirencester was formerly pronounced ['sisitə], but this pronunciation tends now to be given up, even by the natives of the place themselves. No doubt a similar fate would have befallen the name Exeter, had the spelling of this word not been changed in time.

founded on the study of speech-sounds and the changes they undergo. Modern philology, in fact, by acquiring a phonetic basis, has become an exact science, which the old philology, with its so-called and now discredited *Buchstabengesetze* certainly was not, the old philologists being much more inclined to regard language as something seen with the eye and written with the pen than as something heard with the ear and pronounced with the vocal organs. Language therefore is speech, and it is in this sense that the word will be used throughout the rest of this book.[1]

In taking up this attitude we must not appear to depreciate in the least the great importance and usefulness of writing and printing. In learning a foreign language, also, it is quite obviously necessary to master its conventional system of orthography. We must bear in mind, however, that no system of orthography with which we shall have to deal is at all a complete or scientific method of representing the actual spoken language, with whose phenomena the grammarian is alone concerned. To have a perfect system of orthography a language would require a symbol or letter for each of its sounds; the French language, however, has thirty-six sounds, but to represent these it makes use of only twenty-five letters. The word *beaucoup* is composed of four sounds, these being

[1] 'Spoken language, then, comes first, and is the reality of speech; written words are a late invention, and have no life beyond that which the reader puts into them, when he pronounces the sounds for which they were written.'—H. C. Wyld, *Growth of English*, p. 7.

represented by no less than eight letters; on the other hand, the German word *zwanzig* has nine sounds represented by seven letters. Most systems of orthography have grown up in the most haphazard fashion. The spelling of English does not represent the actual pronunciation of the present day, since the changes in orthography have not in the least kept pace with the actual changes in speech.

Writing, then, is not language, it is only a representation of language, and it is in most cases a very imperfect representation of it.[1]

Owing to the impossibility of representing faithfully the realities of speech by means of the conventional alphabets, phoneticians have devised

[1] 'La langue parlée est en voie d'évolution continuelle, tandis que la langue écrite reste immobile ou ne subit que des changements insignifiants; elle ne nous indique pas comment on prononce le français de nos jours, mais comment on le prononçait il y a quelques siècles. Prenons pour exemple le mot *enfant*: il s'écrit avec six lettres; mais dans la langue parlée actuelle il se compose seulement de trois phonèmes; *a* nasal + f + *a* nasal, et se représente phonétiquement par trois signes: [ãfã]. Si nous comparons cette orthographe phonétique avec l'orthographe ordinaire, nous constatons que la seule lettre qu'elles aient en commun est la lettre *f* et que le mot prononcé ne contient ni *e* ni *a* ni *n* ni *t*. En réalité la graphie *enfant* représente le mot tel qu'il se prononçait vers le milieu du XI[e] siècle. Depuis le moyen âge il a subi toute une série de changements phonétiques: les voyelles se sont nasalisées [en > ɛ̃n; an > ãn]; les consonnes nasales sont devenues muettes [ɛ̃n > ɛ̃; ãn > ã]; l'*e* nasal s'est confondu avec l'*a* nasal [ɛ̃ > ã]; le *t* final a disparu [t > o]; —si bien que du groupe primitif l' *f* seule est restée intacte. Et pourtant l'orthographe *enfant* s'est maintenue jusqu' à nos jours, véritable fossile, témoin des âges disparus.'—K. Nyrop, *Manuel Phonétique du Français Parlé*, p. 135.

various phonetic alphabets, the best known of which is that of the International Phonetic Association, which is widely used among philologists, and, as we shall see, can be most serviceable in the practical teaching of languages.

CHAPTER III

THE SCIENCE OF GRAMMAR

GRAMMAR is an inductive science. It aims at the description and explanation of the phenomena of language; in its aim and function it is to be distinguished from the mental sciences of logic and psychology on the one hand and from the art of rhetoric on the other.

Grammar falls naturally into two divisions: descriptive and explanatory. The function of the descriptive grammarian is to describe faithfully the phenomena of language as revealed by observation, not at all to say what they ought to be. Explanatory grammar, on the other hand, seeks to throw light on the nature and origin of these phenomena.[1]

Explanatory Grammar again may be divided broadly into (1) historical and (2) comparative. Grammatical difficulties are in most cases to be explained by tracing them to their origins in the

[1] 'In a word, as students of the History of Language, we are concerned purely with the facts, *all* the facts that we can ascertain, and from them we endeavour to form a clear conception of what *is*, and of how it arose out of what *was*.'—H. C. Wyld, *Historical Study of the Mother Tongue*, p. 20.

past; where this method fails to give satisfactory results, we fall back on comparison with other languages. To rely solely on ingenious theories for the explanation of grammatical phenomena would be as false as to rely on theory to explain the origins of political or social institutions. Descriptive grammar states that in a dependent sentence in modern German the verb stands at the end; explanatory grammar shows how this came about. The y may suggest that the English phrase 'I'll tell you what' is elliptical and equivalent to 'I'll tell you what I am thinking about' or 'I'll tell you what would interest you'; historical inquiry, however, reveals the fact that *what* in this case is a substantive, the meaning being 'I'll tell you something.' Some years ago there was considerable discussion in one of our reviews about the rightness or wrongness of the phrase 'these kind of people'; many fantastic theories were advanced to explain it, until the discussion was brought to an end by a letter from the late Dr. Skeat in which he gave the true explanation, which was, of course, historical: *these kind* was in Middle English a genitive singular (*this kinnes* or *kinds*), followed immediately by a substantive; but the ending of the genitive being dropped, *of* was erroneously inserted before the substantive, and finally *this* was made plural from a feeling that it should agree with, e.g., *people*. Such illustrations could be multiplied; they serve to remind us that language is by no means strictly logical either in its nature or its growth, and that to attempt to study it from the strictly logical

point of view is to proceed by an entirely wrong method.

Grammar may also be divided, according to the different sets of phenomena with which it deals, into sound-study, word-study, and sentence-study; or phonology, accidence, and syntax. In making this classification, however, it is important to bear in mind that it represents an analysis of language made by the grammarian for purposes of study, the unit of language being, as we shall see, neither the sound nor the word but the sentence; and even the grammarian finds it impossible to observe this distinction rigorously.

Phonology deals with speech-sounds, intonation, stress, etc., phenomena of language to which heretofore in most books insufficient attention has been paid. In reality they are of the utmost importance, going to the very root of a language's life and growth and throwing light on many features that would be otherwise obscure.

It is a matter of common observation that precisely the same words spoken with a different intonation can convey a totally different meaning; intonation is therefore strictly a grammatical phenomenon and must be recognized as such. Stress, especially where it is as strongly marked as in English,[1] can equally alter meaning; compare the different meanings conveyed by the sentence

[1] Languages like English are sometimes called *tonic* languages. The term is unfortunate, since it is likely to lead to the confusion of *stress* and *tone* (i.e. pitch). To speak in a monotone is to speak, not with uniform stress, but with uniform pitch.

'I shall ride to town to-morrow,' according to the particular word that is emphasized. Again, the scientific study of speech-sounds is the basis of all historical philology; without some grasp of the principles of phonetics it would be impossible for any student to arrive at an intelligent comprehension of the process by which, e.g., the vowel of the German adjective *lang* became modified in the comparative degree.

It has already been pointed out that the unit of language is not the word, but the sentence. We are so accustomed to seeing words standing separately on the printed page that we are inclined to look upon language as being made up of individual words, whereas we should rather regard words as arising out of an analysis of language. An individual word—except in those cases where one word constitutes a whole sentence—is no more language than a humerus, a tibia, or a cranium is a man. The ancients never made any division into words in writing, and the division to which we are accustomed, although it no doubt represents progress in grammar, is at least to a considerable extent arbitrary.[1] It is not easy to say why 'all

[1] 'Non seulement il n'y a jamais d'arrêt entre tous les mots, mais un peu d'observation suffit pour nous montrer que la division par mots, quelle que soit sa valeur logique, ne répond à aucune réalité matérielle, à aucun fait phonétique. Si l'on prononçait devant nous une phrase en une langue qui nous fût inconnue, nous aurions beau en analyser les sons avec l'exactitude la plus minutieuse, il nous serait impossible de dire où commencent et où finissent les mots. Le sens connu, nous arriverions, au moyen de l'analyse logique, à diviser la phrase en mots, mais non sans de nombreuses comparaisons avec d'autres

right' must be looked upon as two words, while 'already' is regarded as one; nor is it clear why *ab* is a separate word in *ich schreibe den Brief ab*, whereas it is considered to be merely a component syllable of another in *ich habe den Brief abgeschrieben*. *D'abord* we write as two words, but *dorénavant* is always written as one. Whatever explanation it may be possible to give of these and similar instances, of which there are many, it is at least clear that it would require much ingenuity to formulate such a definition of a word as would be in agreement with all the vagaries of orthography.

Since Wundt has written his *Sprache*, our conception of the sentence has undergone a great change. Heretofore it was supposed that the sentence was the outcome of a synthesis, the speaker choosing his words and putting them together to compose it; Wundt, however, has made it clear that it is in reality the outcome of an analysis, that is to say, that the intellectual process by which a sentence is formed is an analytical one. An idea presents itself to the mind in the first place as a complete whole (*eine Gesamtvorstellung*), which has then to be split up into its component parts as the thought finds utterance in language. 'At the instant' (says Wundt) 'in which I begin a sentence, the whole of it already exists in my consciousness as a complete con-

phrases de la même langue; encore est-il probable que notre division ne correspondrait pas exactement à celle des personnes qui écrivent la langue en question comme leur langue maternelle.' —Paul Passy, *Etude sur les Changements Phonétiques*, § 109.

ception.'[1] This, he claims, is in accordance with our everyday experience, as indeed it is; for how otherwise could we ever enter on long and involved sentences as we frequently do, without having carefully thought them out beforehand, or knowing where they will lead us? He goes on to say: 'Moreover, the everyday experience that in speaking we are able to produce a complicated sentence correctly from start to finish, even when we have not thought about it at all beforehand, is clearly only to be explained by this circumstance. This fact would be absolutely incomprehensible if we had to build up the sentence, mosaic fashion, out of separate and previously isolated word-complexes.'[2] It would clearly be much more correct to say that the sentence gets itself unravelled into words than that words are combined together to form sentences. To gain a fuller knowledge of Wundt's views, his whole work should be read; it will amply repay any student of language or of method. The following passage throws further light on his conception of the relations between word and sentence. 'Nor is the sentence a mental complex, which passes bit by bit through our con-

[1] 'In dem Moment, wo ich einen Satz beginne, steht das Ganze desselben bereits als eine Gesamtvorstellung in meinem Bewusstsein.'—*Die Sprache*, vol. i., p. 563.

[2] 'Übrigens ist die alltägliche Erfahrung, dass der Redende einen zusammengesetzten Satz richtig von Anfang bis zu Ende durchführen kann, ohne vorher über ihn irgendwie reflektiert zu haben, offenbar nur aus diesem Verhältnis erklärlich. Diese Tatsache würde absolut unverständlich sein, wenn wir mosaikartig aus einzelnen zuerst isolierten Wortgebilden den Satz zusammenfügen müssten' (*loc. cit.*).

sciousness, and of which at any given moment there exists but a single word or a single sound, whilst that which has gone before and that which follows sinks into oblivion; on the contrary, as long as it is being spoken it exists as a whole in the consciousness. Should this for one moment cease to be the case, we lose irretrievably the thread of our discourse.' [1]

This conception of the sentence has far-reaching significance as regards our attitude both towards grammar and towards method. In regard to the former we realize that since the sentence represents an analysis, it must be composed of at least two distinct parts. But it will be desirable (as Professor R. A. Williams makes clear in his *Uniformity in Languages and Language Study*) to recognize, side by side with the predicative sentence, (which is the commonest form of sentence), another form, the attributive sentence, of the type 'What a beautiful night!' which contains no verb, but is incontestably composed of two parts and expresses an idea. Sentences of this type have heretofore been explained by the assumption of an ellipsis—by supplying *it is* 'understood.' But, as Professor Williams well points out, the habit of explaining grammatical phenomena by the unlimited assump-

[1] 'Auch ist der Satz kein punktuell durch unser Bewusstsein laufendes Gebilde, von dem immer nur ein einzelnes Wort oder ein einzelner Laut existiert, während Vorangegangenes und Nachfolgendes in Nacht versinkt; sondern, so lang er gesprochen wird, steht er als Ganzes im Bewusstsein. Wo das einmal nicht der Fall sein sollte, da verlieren wir unrettbar den Faden der Rede.'—*Die Sprache*, vol. ii., p. 235.

tion of ellipses has been carried to quite absurd lengths ; [1] and it is, moreover, an unsound practice, for it is the business of the grammarian to deal with the actual language used and not with the thought-processes to which it may possibly give rise in the mind of the hearer. And as regards method, we must conclude that any plan for teaching languages which begins with individual words and seeks to combine them together into sentences is directly opposed to the natural linguistic process.

[1] 'Ein unvoilständiger Satz bleibt immer nur da anzuerkennen, wo die Bedeutung fehlender Wörter unzweideutig aus dem Inhalt des Gesprochenen ersehen wird, nicht da wo ich die allerverschiedensten Gedanken zu dem Gesprochenen hinzudenken könnte.'—Wundt, *Sprache*, vol. ii., p. 232.

CHAPTER IV

THOUGHT AND LANGUAGE

As writing is a symbolization of language, so language in its turn is only a symbolization of thought. Thought-problems are the affair of the psychologist, their outward manifestation in language is the main concern of the grammarian. Between thought and language there is no exact correspondence;[1] no more than there is between language and writing. Language is not strictly logical; it would be as reasonable to suppose that human nature itself were strictly logical. It is the instrument not only of the reason, but also of the emotions. It is a social product, the outcome of long usage, and the most various external influences, the resultant of phonetic laws over which the individual has, strictly speaking, no control.[2] It is quite certain, for example, that the vowel change in *foot*, *feet*, was not made consciously with the intention of expressing plurality; it happened in accordance with a phonetic development well known to philologists. We are aware

[1] 'Language is always an imperfect instrument of thought.'—Sweet, *New English Grammar*, vol. i., p. 11.

[2] See Appendix B.

also of the plentiful presence in language of so-called antilogical constructions and anacolutha. A good example has already been mentioned in the phrase 'these kind of people,' which bids fair to become an accepted expression; and those who are shocked by such forms must bear in mind that many accepted constructions are of no more respectable origin. Thus *you*, now used as a nominative, was originally a dative plural; we may note also the use of past tenses as present—English *can*, German *muss*, Latin *odi*.[1]

There has been a considerable tendency in the past - a tendency which unfortunately has yet by no means completely spent itself—to apply to language the terminology of formal logic, which is utterly unsuited to it. It has even been claimed for grammar that it is an elementary training in logic! This tendency has affected adversely not only grammatical science, but also method, for it is largely answerable for the absurd attempt to teach languages by means of a process of ratiocination. But the logician is concerned only with the thought-content of a sentence, while the grammarian is primarily concerned with its linguistic form. To adopt the attitude of the logician is to judge sentences only according to their logical

[1] It would be a great mistake to suppose that such developments are found in modern languages only. Sweet instances the Latin construction with *iri*. 'We can observe a more marked kind of shifting in the Latin *laudātum īrī*, to be about to be praised, which means, literally, "to-be-gone to-praise" instead of "to-go to-be-praised."'—*New English Grammar*, vol. i., p. 47.

value; and it is this attitude which is responsible for the attempt, e.g., to rule out all difference (see p. 15) between the two sentences 'What a beautiful night!' and 'What a beautiful night it is!' Obviously both sentences have the same *logical* value; but language is a very subtle and elusive thing, and can express much more than cold reason; otherwise it would, as Professor Williams points out, be, amongst other things, quite unsuitable for the purposes of poetry—indeed we might say for human intercourse. It is manifest that between the two sentences there is an external difference of form; it is equally clear that there is difference in the shades of meaning they convey. It is incumbent on us to recognize these obvious differences instead of explaining them away by a system of grammatical sophistry.

Since grammar deals with language and logic with the thought conveyed by it, the grammatical and logical categories are not always in agreement; sometimes they are directly contradictory. Thus such expressions as *mancher Mann*, *maint homme*, are regarded by the grammarian as singulars, because they show singular inflection; the logician, however, concerned, not with the forms of language, but with the meaning underlying it, puts them in the category of plurality, because they signify more than one.

The confusion between grammar and logic has no doubt been largely responsible for the notion that languages could be learnt by translating word by word from one into the other. Such a method

would be directly opposed to the natural linguistic process (p. 13), and is, as we shall see, to be condemned on all grounds of theory and practice. Trying to master a foreign language by sheer force of reason is like making love in terms of logic; it reminds one a little of Monsieur Jourdain's ambition *de tuer son homme par raison démonstrative!*

If we take a pair of French and German sentences, *La jeune fille descend l'escalier en courant* and *Ich habe das gestern von meinem Bruder gekaufte Haus gesehen*, and compare them with their English equivalents, *The girl is running downstairs*, and *I've seen the house my brother bought yesterday*, the absurdity of any system of learning to construct such sentences by word for word translation from English will be apparent. As we have already seen, Wundt has made it clear that the linguistic process, the intellectual operation by which sentences are formed, is not synthetic, but analytical. Learning a foreign language simply means acquiring the habit of performing this process in terms of the foreign language and from the standpoint of the foreign speaker, rather than in terms of our own.[1] Between any two languages whatever there is a wide gulf of difference; differences of construction, of word-order, of idiom; there are differences even so subtle and elusive that they appear wholly to defy formal definition. In acquiring the habit of linguistic expression in a foreign tongue, our constant difficulty is the deep-

[1] See Appendix A.

seated linguistic habits already acquired in our own. The learner is beset at every turn with the temptation to follow the path of least resistance and substitute for the speech-sounds, intonation, stress, word-order, constructions, idioms, etc., of the foreign language those of the language with which he is already familiar. The learning of a foreign language is a continual struggle to overcome such tendencies, a continual effort to form new habits of speech; and this, it may be well to note, involves a very considerable exercise of will-power by the learner over himself.[1] It follows that to put his own language before the learner by way of helping him is only to put difficulties in his way. In these circumstances it is evident that no place can be given to translation *as a means of learning languages;* translation is not a help, but a hindrance.

[1] A not uninteresting analogy is to be found in the realm of sport, in the case of a cricketer who takes up golf in middle age; only the habits that have to be formed in the one case are physical, while in the other case they are both physical and intellectual.

CHAPTER V

TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR

'ENGLISH grammar,' wrote Lindley Murray, in words familiar to a past generation, 'is the art of speaking and writing the English language with propriety.' This definition represents very fairly the traditional attitude towards grammar, still very largely persisting in our schools. Grammar was regarded as an art, not as a science.

The grammarian of our own language considered that his function was to settle usage and control development; but from the point of view of the scientific grammarian, who looks on language as a thing that lives and grows and changes, he might as well set himself to control the tides or the winds. Language develops in accordance with laws natural to itself; to attempt to deter people, e.g., from ending English sentences with prepositions, a construction which is clearly quite in keeping with the genius of our language, is foolishly to oppose what our linguistic sense teaches us to be right, and to do violence to the natural tendencies of English speech.[1]

[1] 'If we regard the unfolding of that body of habits which we call "language" as a natural process, one which is for the most part unconscious and independent of the deliberate intention of

As regards foreign languages, grammar was regarded as a means of learning them; it consisted of rules and paradigms, lists of plurals and feminines, etc., a large part of which should be found, not in grammar-books at all, but in the dictionary. From what has already been said about the nature of language it will be evident that any attempt to acquire a foreign tongue by the learning of paradigms and rules must meet with failure. When the learner appears to be learning from a rule, he is in reality learning from the example which accompanies it. Moreover, the nature of language is such that, however skilfully we devise our rules, they will fail to cover all its features. The learner will always be meeting difficulties in which no rule can guide him. In regard to our own language, we are always ready confidently to tell a foreigner of any given expression that it is English or that it is not English, though in many cases we should find it impossible to say why. In this we are guided by our *linguistic sense*, developed by long usage, by continually hearing and speaking our language, by intercourse with the best speakers,

the speakers, we are content to chronicle what actually exists, and investigate so far as possible how it arose: we do not attempt to adjudge praise or blame to this or that phenomenon.' — H. C. Wyld, *Historical Study of the Mother Tongue*, p. 20. The aim of the grammarian is therefore to record, classify, and explain the various ways of expressing thought in language. The question of the artistic value of such modes of expression, i.e. their 'correctness,' is one for the student of style, who however cannot form his judgment without the aid of the grammarian. Such valuation is accordingly not a part of grammar, but one of its applications.

by reading the best writers. And whatever methods we may adopt to acquire another language, our task finally resolves itself into that of similarly acquiring linguistic sense in it also. And that linguistic sense can only be created by using the language: by talking it, not by talking about it; by reading it, not by reading about it.[1]

Lindley Murray divided grammar into four parts: orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody.

Orthography is not a part of grammar, for it does not deal directly with linguistic phenomena at all, it is only a method of representing language by means of conventional signs; moreover, it is not even a scientific method of so representing it. It is important that this should be realized, because of the tendency to classify spelling mistakes as mistakes in grammar. Thus a pupil is supposed to be guilty of a very grave grammatical blunder who writes *parlez* instead of *parlé* or *parler*. This, however, is not strictly a grammatical mistake at all, it is merely an orthographical mistake: the four spellings *parler*, *parlez*, *parlé*, and *parlai* represent only one pronunciation [parle], that is, they represent only one word;[2] therefore from the point of view of the scientific grammarian the

[1] 'The learning of a second language is precisely the same process as the learning of a first, of one's own mother-tongue.' —W. D. Whitney, *Life and Growth of Language*, p. 24. Whitney's statement requires qualification, however. See remarks in Chapter IX about the difficulties created for the learner by the linguistic habits already formed.

[2] 'The pronunciation is the actual living form or forms of a word—that is, *the word itself*.'—Oxford Dictionary, *General Explanations*.

phenomenon to be noted is that the one word [parle] performs four separate functions, that of infinitive, past participle, second person plural of the present, and first person singular of the past definite. That the word is variously spelt has to be noted for purposes of orthography, which of course cannot be neglected; but orthography, it must be repeated, is not grammar.[1]

That prosody is no part of grammar as defined in this book is self-evident.

The old-fashioned grammar-book was, in fact, a most miscellaneous compilation: it trespassed freely on the domains of logic, rhetoric, psychology, lexicography, metrics, and orthography, but grammar in the strict sense was the last thing with which it dealt. Phonology, for example, which is, as we have seen, in a sense the foundation of grammar, it wholly neglected; yet in the best English grammar so far written no less than eighty pages are devoted to phonology alone. I refer, of course, to Henry Sweet's *New English Grammar*.[2]

When it is laid down that a foreign language is

[1] 'The student of English who looks back through the centuries at the development of the language has to interpret the written symbols of each age, and translate them into the sounds of living speech.'—H. C. Wyld, *Growth of English*, p. 196.

[2] A New English Grammar. By Henry Sweet. 2 vols. Oxford University Press, 1893. It is regrettable to have to add that this interesting work is still *new* as far as many persons who should be familiar with it are concerned. As Sweet's work is however rather large for school use, reference may be made to H. C. Wyld's *Elementary English Grammar* (Oxford University Press), a stimulating introduction to grammar for young people.

best acquired by speaking it, the objection is often put forward that this method involves a neglect of grammar. What the persons who make this objection mean by grammar is the traditional grammar just described. We now see what is the value of this 'grammar': it is evident that it is neither practically useful nor theoretically sound. It is well contrasted with the modern science of grammar in the following passage of Professor Williams' *Uniformity in Languages and Language Study*:

'The latter [i.e., traditional grammar] is a very old tradition in our schools, bound by a routine which has been observed for centuries. Theoretical grammar as now conceived is, on the other hand, a quite recent thing: as a method aiming at the scientific comprehension of linguistic phenomena, it represents very largely a new view of, and a new interest in, those phenomena; it is a consequence of the widening and deepening of the scientific spirit which is so characteristic of our modern era. It has really about as much in common with practical grammar in the traditional sense as modern chemistry has with medieval alchemy.

'The natural conditions of the school make it exceedingly conservative; that is reflected in the struggle so often repeated which is necessary before new subjects, more especially scientific subjects, are taken into its educational programme. It is plain that even at the present day for the schoolmaster the conception of grammar as a practical

subject remains the prevalent one. Otherwise we could not explain . . . the fact that even among educated men probably nine out of every ten have no conception of grammar except the vague idea that it is a method of learning foreign languages' (§ 7).

If practical grammar accomplished its aim—that of guarding the learner from making mistakes—there would be something to be said for it. But it does not and cannot accomplish this aim. Correctness in the use of language depends on the practical linguistic sense, which can only be acquired by use. The development of this linguistic sense is hardly helped at all by grammatical knowledge, which only creates the *critical* sense; this critical sense can judge the final product, but can do nothing to produce it. The general tendency to exalt the critical sense at the expense of the practical sense appears to be historically traceable to the study of dead languages.

The persistence of the belief in the efficacy of grammar as an aid to correct speaking and writing is curious, since it is contrary to all our experience. Every schoolmaster knows that a learner—even an intelligent learner—will continue to make the most elementary mistakes in the use of a foreign language long after he has become familiar with all necessary rules. If learning the declension of *der gute Mann* could safeguard the learner from error in the use of it, the mastering of a foreign tongue would be a very simple matter indeed. The main principles of word-order in

German, for instance, can be briefly and clearly formulated; but every practical teacher knows that familiarity with such rules does not prevent the learner from breaking them. Of all the English boys who have ever failed to put the verb at the end of a dependent sentence in German, it is very doubtful whether even one has erred through ignorance of the rule. The notion that the grammatical mistakes made by a learner are due to lack of grammatical knowledge is wholly false; this is often curiously illustrated in examinations, where a candidate will not infrequently gain marks in one section of the paper by stating a grammatical rule correctly, and a little further on break the same rule in his composition! The detached and critical study of the grammatical features of a language is one thing, the practical command of it as an instrument of thought another; regarded from either standpoint, the traditional 'grammar' taught in schools is clearly unsatisfactory.

CHAPTER VI

SPEECH-SOUNDS

EVERY language can be resolved into a definite number of distinct speech-sounds. The careful study of these, their nature and manner of production, claims our attention on two grounds. Theoretically, it is of importance because phonology is the first division of grammar, and a practical training in phonetics is absolutely necessary to the philologist, whose work compels him to ignore the conventional spelling and look to the real word beyond it; for words, it cannot be too often repeated, are composed not of letters, but of sounds. From the practical point of view the scientific study of speech-sounds is necessary, because *without such training it is impossible to arrive at a pure pronunciation of a foreign tongue.*

To ignore phonetics as a means of acquiring pronunciation is to rely on imitation alone. Imitation, however, is insufficient, and the notion that strange speech-sounds could be so acquired is founded on ignorance of the difficulty of the undertaking.[1]

[1] 'The first of these [fallacies] is that pronunciation can be learnt by mere imitation. This is as if fencing could be learnt by looking on at other people fencing. The movements of the tongue in speaking are even quicker and more complicated than

It is not too much to say that in English and, e.g., French there are no two sounds that are exactly alike; there are many sounds which, because they are represented by the same symbols in both languages, might be assumed to correspond, but which the phonetician knows to be appreciably different, e.g. the sounds represented by l, r, t; and there are many sounds in French—and the same applies equally to German, Spanish, or Russian—which to the English speaker are utterly unfamiliar and have to be painfully acquired—added, so to speak, to his phonetic repertory. Some persons are inclined to deprecate so thorough a treatment of all the sounds of a language as being unnecessary; it should be borne in mind, however, that a bad pronunciation consists very often not so much in a few glaring faults as in a great number of slight mispronunciations, as may appear from an attentive consideration of the indifferent English of a foreigner.

A full description of the speech-sounds of the foreign languages studied in schools would be out

those of the foil in fencing, and are, besides, mostly concealed from sight.'—Henry Sweet, *Practical Study of Languages*, p. 5.

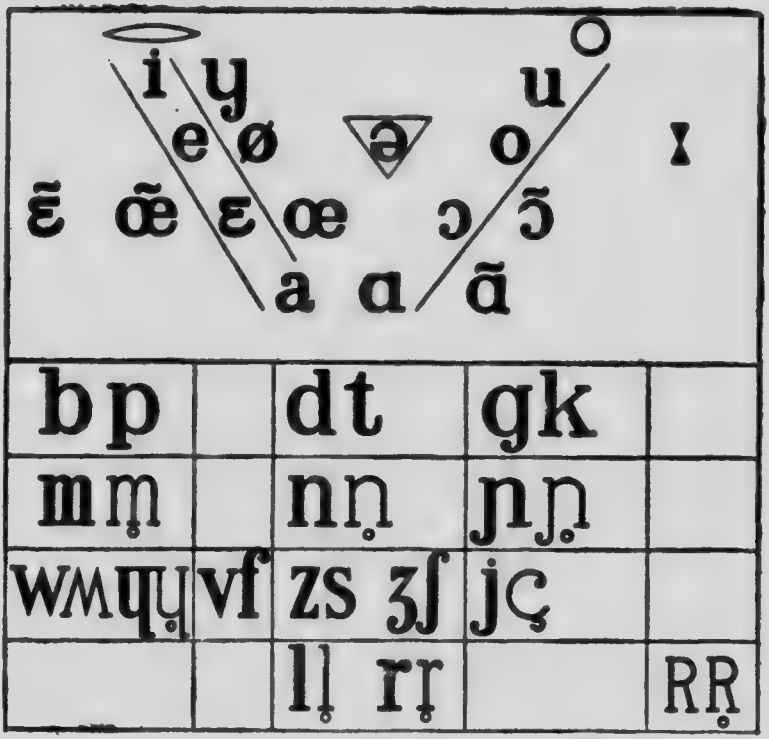
'The number of persons whose imitative faculties, and powers of linguistic adaptation are so great, that they can, in a short space of time, acquire a large number of entirely new sounds, an entirely new *Speech Basis*, is very small indeed—I should be surprised to learn that there was more than one such in a given year in all the Training Colleges of Scotland and England put together.'—H. C. Wyld, *The Teaching of Reading*, p. 18. Professor Wyld is here speaking, not of the teaching of foreign languages, but of the teaching of the pronunciation of our own to students in Training Colleges!

of place in this book; for this purpose the reader must study manuals of phonetics and get instruction from teachers specially qualified in the subject; the aim of this chapter is rather to send the student who is in need of it to consult such books and such teachers.

The student of phonetics must begin by making himself familiar with the physiology of the vocal organs. When he has gained clear notions of how speech is produced, his next task must be to develop consciousness as to exactly what he does (with his tongue, lips, etc.) in pronouncing this or that sound; such consciousness is best developed in the first place in his own language, for one is scarcely in a position to understand how, e.g., a French or German *l* is to be pronounced until he has become conscious of the process by which he has been accustomed to pronounce an English *l*. Such consciousness the ordinary person does not possess, because he has never reflected about the matter; indeed if the elements of English phonetics were systematically taught in our schools, as they ought to be, the teaching of modern languages would be greatly simplified. Even educated people have usually only the vaguest notions of how they pronounce the various sounds of their own language; such knowledge, however, is necessary, for the acquiring of a new pronunciation is really the acquiring of a new series of muscular habits—of the tongue, lips, jaws, etc.—and in acquiring these habits it is evidently useful to know not only what to aim at, but also

what to avoid; at first there will always be a tendency to slip back into the deeply rooted speech-habits to which one has been so long accus-

LES SONS DU FRANÇAIS



For permission to reproduce the above sound-chart I am indebted to Mr. Walter Ripman (*see* Bibliography). The numbers added to the key words on the opposite page refer to sections in his *Elements of Phonetics* (Dent & Sons).

tomed. To begin the teaching of a language by a thorough training in its sounds is evidently to economise both time and effort as well as to avoid

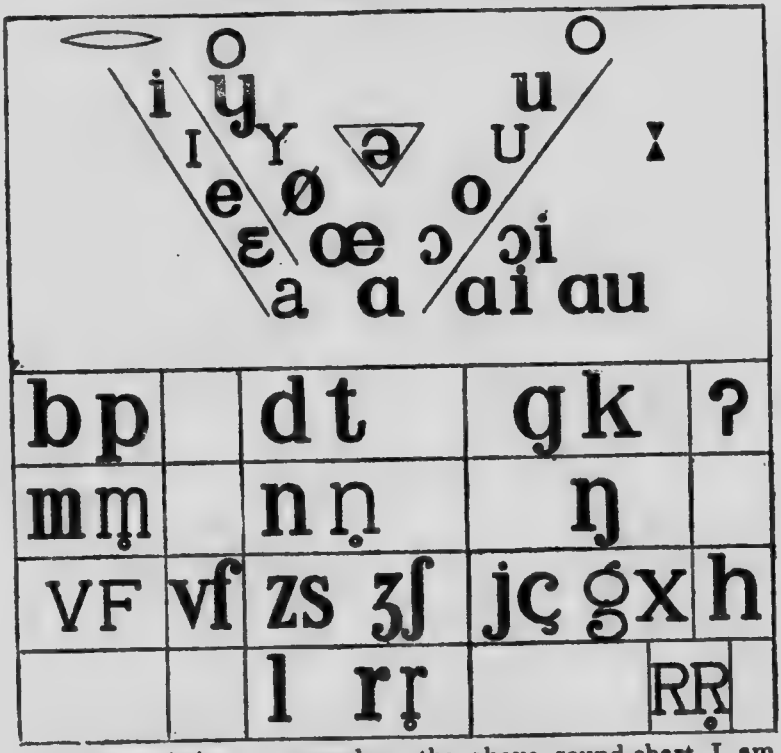
i: dire i dit e été ɛ: tête ɛ sel	y: pure y pu ø: heureuse ø peu œ: peur œ neuf	u: rouge u tout o: rose o mot ɔ: or ɔ homme
a: rage a ma	ɑ: âne ɑ pas	ə le, cheval
ɛ̃ vin	œ̃ un	ɔ̃ bon	ɑ̃ blanc
b bas p pas	d don t ton	g gomme k comme
m ma (ɱ 140)	n non (ɳ 137)	ɲ agneau (ɲ 134)
w oui (ʍ 112) ɥ lui (ɥ 112)	v ver f fer	z douze s douce ʒ gens ʃ champ	j bien, feuille (ç 89)
l le (ɫ 108)	r rouge (ɾ 104)	(R ʀ 82)

endless trouble in the correction of mistakes;[1]

[1] 'I believe that a careful instruction in the organic formation of sounds, the association of each sound with one definite sign, which is of such a nature and occupies such a position on a chart, always hanging before the eyes of the class, as to call up at once the sound associated with it, followed by daily sign and sound

for, when the new habits are once formed, we speak the foreign tongue—so far at least as pro-

DEUTSCHE LAUTE



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drill, by constant sound-analysis, by practice in reading and writing the signs, in due course followed by a methodical transition to orthography, consisting of the laborious hunting-out and classification of the orthographic equivalents for the phonetic signs—I believe that all this is a definite saving of time in the class-room, and that it may even lengthen the teacher's time on this earth by saving him the expenditure of much nervous energy.'—M. P. Andrews in *Modern Language Teaching* [the organ of the Modern Language Association] for April, 1905.

nunciation is concerned—with the same ease with which we speak our own. But it is well to realize

i: wie ɪ bin e: Schnee ɛ: Bär ɛ Berg		y: Blüte ʏ Hütte ø: Söhne œ Töchter		u: du ʊ und o: Sohn ɔ Tochter	
(a 53)		ɑ: habe ɑ hat		ə habe	
oi treu		ɑi drei		au trau	
b Bein p Pein, ab		d da t tat, und		g groß k klein, Berg	ʔ 34
m mein (m̥ 141)		n nah (n 138)		ŋ jung	
(vꜰ 113)	v wir f vier	z Hase s hasse ʒ Journal ʃ schön, stark, sprechen		j jung ç ich (g 86) x ach	h hoh
l alt		r rot (ɾ 105)		(R, R 83)	

that the difficulties to be overcome are considerable, especially at the beginning, and that it is im-

possible to acquire a correct pronunciation in any language without hard, strenuous, muscular effort.

Having acquired as much preliminary knowledge as necessary, the student is now in a position to proceed to the systematical study, one by one, of the sounds of the foreign tongue, to the writing of phonetic dictations and the reading of phonetic texts. For this purpose it will be necessary for him to make himself familiar with a phonetic alphabet. To illustrate the use of such an alphabet the writer has appended to this chapter some examples of phonetic writing in French, German, Spanish, and Russian, taken from one of the publications of the International Phonetic Association

It is the universal experience that a thorough training of this kind is a revelation to the person who previously thought that his pronunciation was 'good enough'; for the person whose pronunciation is 'good enough' is likely to make no distinction between *lui* and *Louis*, between the French word *fille* and the English word *fee*, between the German *Quell* and the English *quell*, and to pronounce more or less alike the *ch* sounds in *Tochter*, *Töchter* and *Fuchs*, all of which, however, are widely different. It is not always easy to persuade people beforehand of the necessity of phonetic training, but those who go through such training are invariably convinced of its usefulness afterwards.[1]

[1] 'The dissentient voices raised against Phonetics are not from those who know, who are well trained themselves, who have applied Phonetic method patiently and skilfully, and found

it useless, but from persons who, possibly through no fault of their own, are not trained, who are quite ignorant of the subject, who have never tried it, who have never bestowed any serious thought upon the matter, and who are, therefore, not qualified to speak.'—H. C. Wyld, *The Teaching of Reading*, p. 5.

'The importance of phonetics as the indispensable foundation of all study of language—whether that study be purely theoretical, or practical as well—is now generally admitted. Without a knowledge of the laws of sound-change, scientific philology—whether comparative or historical—is impossible, and without phonetics their study degenerates into a mere mechanical enumeration of letter-changes. And now that philologists are directing their attention more and more to the study of living dialects and savage languages, many of which have to be written down for the first time, the absolute necessity of a thorough practical as well as a theoretical mastery of phonetics becomes more and more evident. . . . Again, if our present wretched system of studying modern languages is ever to be reformed, it must be on the basis of a preliminary training in general phonetics, which would at the same time lay the foundation of a thorough practical study of the pronunciation and elocution of our own language—subjects which are totally ignored in our present scheme of education.'—Henry Sweet, *Handbook of Phonetics* (Preface).

SPECIMENS OF PHONETIC WRITING

(Taken from 'The Aims and Principles of the International Phonetic Association')

French.

la bi:z e l sɔlɛ:j sə dispyt, ʃakɛ̃ asy:rɑ̃ k il etɛ l ply fɔ:r, kɑ̃t iz ɔ̃ vy ɑ̃ vwajaʒœ:r ki ɛ avɑ̃:sɛ, ɑ̃vlɔpe dɑ̃ sɔ̃ mɑ̃:to. i sɔ̃ tɔ̃:be dakɔ:r, kə sɔlqi ki arivrɛ l prɔmje a fɛ:r ɔ:te sɔ̃ mɑ̃:to ɔ vwajaʒœ:r, sɛrɛ rgarde kɔm lə ply fɔ:r. alɔ:r la bi:z ɛ ɛ mi a sufle d tut sɛ .ɔrɛ; mɛ ply sl sufle, ply l vwajaʒœ:r sɛ:rɛ sɔ̃ mɑ̃:to otur də lqi; e a la fɛ̃ la bi:z a rnɔ̃:sɛ a lə lqi fɛ:r ɔ:te. alɔ:r la sɔlɛ:j a kɔmɑ̃:sɛ a brije, e ɔ bu d ɑ̃ mɔmɑ̃ l vwajaʒœ:r, reʃɔ:fe, a ɔ:te sɔ̃ mɑ̃:to. ɛ:si la bi:z a dy rkɔnɛ:trə kə l sɔlɛ:j etɛ l ply fɔ:r də dɛ.

German.

'ainst ʃritəh ziç nɔrtvint 'unt zɔnə, vɛ:r fɔn 'i:nən baidən vo:l dər ʃtɛrkərə vɛ:rə, 'als 'ain vandərər, dər 'in 'ainən varmən mantəl gə'hylt va:r, dɛs vɛ:gɛs da'hɛ:r ka:m. zi: vurdən 'ainiç, das dɛ:rjɛ:nigə fy:r dən ʃtɛrkərən gəltən zɔltə, dər dən vandərər təvinən vy:rdə, zainən mantəl 'aptəu:nɛ:mən. dər nɔrtvint bli:s mit 'alər maxt, 'abər jə· mɛ:r 'ər bli:s, dɛstə· fɛstər hyltə ziç dər vandərər 'in zainən mantəl 'ain. 'ɛntliç gə:p dər nɔrtvint dən kampf 'auf. nu:n 'ər'vɛrmtə di· zɔnə di· luft mit 'i:rən frɔyntliçən ʃtra:lən 'unt ʃɔ:n na:x vɛ:nigən 'augənbliken tɛɔ:k dər vandərər zainən mantəl 'aus. da· mustə dər nɔrtvint tsu:gɛ:bən, das di· zɔnə fɔn 'i:nən baidən dər ʃtɛrkərə va:r.

Spanish.

disputavan el θierθo j el sol, porfiando kaða kũal eŋ k el tenia mas fũerθa, kũando ðe pɹonto, ben ʌe'gaɹ um bʲaxeɹo emboθaðð en una gɹaŋ kapa. kombinʲeɹon eŋ ke kʲen antes axia ke l bʲaxeɹo se kitase la kapa keðaɹia por mas fũerte. el θierθo se ponẽ a so'plar ðe firme; peɹo kũanto mas soplava, mas el bʲaxeɹo sẽ arreɛuxaðã en la kapa: al fin, desis'tʲo ðẽ a'θersela ki'tar. entonθes, el sol em'pʲeθ a rresplande'θer, j al kabo ðẽ um momento, el bʲaxeɹo sʲente ka'loɹ i se kita la kapa. a'si, el θierθo ueo ðe komfe'sar k eɹã el sol kʲen tenia mas fũerθa.

Russian.

ad'nazdə, 'sevirnoi 'vetir i 'sontsə 'spoɨlɨ, 'kto iż 'nix əil'noi. kak 'ras v 'stə 'vremi a'ni za'metilɨ za'kutenəvə f 'płaʃtʃ 'putnika, pədvi'gaʃʃəvəsi pə da'rəgi, i pəri'ʃilɨ, ʃtə 'tot iż 'nix 'budɨt ʃtʃi'tatsə 'samam 'silnəm, ka'mu 'ranʃə ō'dastsə za'stavit 'putnika 'sinat 'płaʃtʃ. 'tut 'sevirnoi 'vetir prinił'sa 'dut iza 'fsex 'sił; nə 'tʃem sil'noi 'on 'duł, 'tem sil'noi 'kutəsə 'putnik f 'svoi 'płaʃtʃ, 'tak ʃtə f kan'tsəf 'sevirnoi 'vetir 'dołgən 'bił etka'zatsə et sv'oi za'datʃi. ta'da zəsi'alə 'səlnəʃka, 'putnik pənim'nogō eta'grelə i 'fskərə 'sinał 'svoi 'płaʃtʃ. ta'kim 'obrezəm 'sevirnoi 'vetir 'vinōżdin 'bił pri'znat, ʃta 'sontsə sil'noi i'vo.

CHAPTER VII

SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS OF METHOD

LEARNING a language means learning to speak it, to read it, and to write it.

Of these aims the last two will scarcely be in dispute, since they represent the traditional attitude towards the question, modern languages having formerly been taught, as unfortunately to a considerable extent they still are, as dead languages (that is, languages that are no longer spoken); though it is at least highly doubtful whether it is possible to learn even to write a living language correctly without learning to speak it. The desirability of mastering the spoken language as well is perhaps not so universally admitted, though probably only very few persons would be found nowadays seriously to call this aim in question. It will be sufficient therefore to point out that, as has already been shown, to fail to study language as living speech is to neglect important aspects of its grammar. Moreover, familiarity with the spoken language is an indispensable aid to true literary appreciation; while it is impossible to arrive at an intelligent comprehension of the laws of prosody without a knowledge of phonetics.

And apart from these considerations, the sheer practical value of being able to converse in a foreign tongue can scarcely be exaggerated, a fact to which, as a nation, we are not sufficiently alive.

But while these three aims might be admitted by most persons, there would probably be a sharper difference of opinion as to their priority, or relative importance. The traditions of scholarship are very closely connected with the study of the printed word, and the idea that the study of living speech may be conducive to scholarship, either literary or philological, is still far from being generally accepted. The three aims, however, are by no means in conflict; so far is this from being the case, that *learning to speak a language is always by far the shortest road to learning to read it and to write it.*

For the language *is* speech; and having gained the power to express himself in speech, the only thing necessary for the learner in order to reduce speech to writing is to make himself familiar with its orthographical system.

It has already been pointed out that a language must be acquired by *using* it; now by using the language as speech the pupil will cover something like twenty times as much ground in a given time as he would by doing written exercises—apart altogether from the consideration that written exercises alone hardly bring one into touch with the realities of language at all. This is a serious consideration, for time is a most important factor in the practical problem of teaching languages in schools.

The acquiring of a language is the acquiring of an art, the art of expressing oneself in that language; this art, like every other art, must be acquired by practice—that is, by using the language; the most satisfactory manner of using the language from the practical point of view of economy of time and effort is as speech, and it is also, theoretically, the most natural; it follows, therefore, that a language should be learnt by speaking it.

It has already been shown that in acquiring the art of expression in the foreign tongue, we must aim at avoiding so far as possible the speech-habits to which we have been accustomed; and this applies as much to the physical basis of language as to the intellectual operation involved, for by using the mother-tongue during the French lesson we shall greatly heighten the danger of slipping back into our own basis of articulation. It is next to impossible to speak any foreign language correctly if we are continually mixing it up with English words. A foreign word pronounced in the course of a rapid English sentence is of necessity to a greater or less extent mispronounced; so also an English word pronounced in the course of speaking a foreign language will be found in almost all cases to take on something of the flavour of that language. Our aim must be one language at a time and one basis of articulation at a time.

At the beginning of this book it was laid down that the question of method had to be regarded from two different points of view: from the practical point of view, we seek the method which

will lead most directly to a command of the foreign language; theoretically, we demand that it shall be in keeping with the nature of language and lead to an intelligent comprehension of linguistic phenomena. We now see that a consideration of both these aspects of the problem leads us to the enunciation of the two following principles:

1. Living languages should be taught as living speech; that is, they should be taught orally.
2. In learning a foreign language we must aim at forgetting, so far as possible for the time being, the linguistic habits already acquired in our own.

This last statement brings us to what is called the *direct method*, which aims at teaching the foreign language through itself, without (so far as possible, at least) the intervention of the mother-tongue. Teaching a foreign language without the help of the mother-tongue must seem to the uninitiated something quite impracticable, like walking on air; the principle is, however, applied with striking success in many schools on the continent and in the most progressive schools of this country.

Since the 'direct method' is here mentioned for the first time, and since this term is loosely and ignorantly used to denote almost any system of teaching which is a departure from the old translation method, it may be well to point out at once that it is, in reality, not a method at all. All that

is essential in it, all that it may definitely be said to stand for, is contained in statement No. 2 above; and that statement has been enunciated by the writer, not in support of any one 'method' more than another, but because from the point of view of a scientific inquiry into the question of the teaching of languages—which is the aim of this book—it appears to be practically and theoretically sound. For the teaching of a living language is a complicated and many-sided process, and to suppose that this whole process could be covered by any one principle would be absurd. Supposing that a teacher adopts the principle in question, but neglects to give his pupils preparatory phonetic training: the result will almost certainly be that the oral work of his class will be of very poor quality, probably even in many cases unintelligible; they will not be able to acquit themselves creditably in reading aloud; they will not be in a position to appreciate either the melody of verse or the rhythm of fine prose. And there are many other aspects of this problem of language teaching, both practical and theoretical, which the principle of the 'direct method' fails to embrace. We can only say that the principle, so far as it goes, is thoroughly sound; but the more familiar we are with the complexity of the problem, and the more generously conceived our educational aims, the less likely shall we be to fall into the absurdity of supposing that the teaching of language can be summed up in any one formula, much less in the kind of catch-phrase that only serves as a label

to save lazy-minded people the trouble of thinking about the realities behind it.

Yet, it must be repeated, the principle of the 'direct method' is most valuable, and has created a great revolution in the teaching of languages in schools;[1] and if the result has not in all cases been as good as one could have wished, this is certainly not due to any defect in the principle itself, but either to the fact that our teachers, being in many cases wholly untrained, are lacking in the degree of technical skill necessary to apply it successfully, or else to the fact that the conditions of teaching, in regard to such matters as length of hours and size of classes, are unsatisfactory.

The aim of the 'direct method' has often been stated to be the establishment of direct connection between the foreign word and the thing to which it refers. This conception appears to me to be unsatisfactory, and open to various objections. In the first place, it is obviously based on the old synthetic view of language, which regarded the word as the unit. If we accept the view that the sentence represents not a synthesis but an analysis, then our purpose must be to connect not the individual elements of the analysis with their expression, *but the expression of the whole analysis*

[1] 'Quite deliberately the present writer ventures to assert that the "reform" in Modern Language Teaching now in progress is one of the most noteworthy events in the sphere of *teaching* since the Renaissance, surpassing in importance even the results of introducing Science to the school.'—J. J. Findlay, *Principles of Class Teaching*, p. 200.

with the idea analysed; in other words, to connect the sentence with the concept it represents. We must hold to the sentence as the unit, and the meanings of words must be learnt in sentences. . . . It can also be objected that the attempt to establish direct connection between the foreign word and the thing is rather difficult of accomplishment in an English classroom: it is not easy to teach exactly what *fenêtre* means for a Frenchman when the only kind of window available is an English window! Moreover, the difficulty of creating this kind of direct connection, namely, between the word and the thing has been emphasized by no less a writer than Sweet who urges (*Practical Study of Languages*, p. 190) that it is impossible to teach, e.g., the meaning of *Hut* by showing the pupils a hat, for *Hut* is a general term, and in order to convey its full meaning we should have to show all sorts of different kinds of hats—a tall hat, a straw hat, a three-cornered hat, a bowler hat, etc. But while this objection appears to be valid *in so far as it refers to individual words*, it does not apply to the establishment of direct connection between a 'total idea' and its composite expression. If I put a hat in front of my class saying, *Ich setze den Hut auf*, the pupils will connect the sentence with the general idea of putting on a head-covering and will even use it for practising until they are corrected. In other words, the mistake they are likely to make, if any, is that of giving the word too general and not too restricted a meaning;

which obviously is much less dangerous. Similarly, when a boy has once learnt the sentence *ouvrez la fenêtre* he will associate it with an abstract idea—the meaning of all sentences is abstract—which can in different circumstances have different concrete applications; and for that reason will not hesitate to use it in speaking of a door, window, simply because it looks different; he would be equally sure of its meaning in a Turkish mosque! A little child who first sees a cat at the Zoo exclaims, 'Look at the big cat!' As he progresses in knowledge of the language he finds that different kinds of 'cats' have different names—panther, leopard, tiger, etc.

It has been objected that the method does not teach the correct meaning of words. But it would be absurd to try to teach a child to give such an exact definition of the meaning of a word as a philologist would; that is a thing very few of us can do even in our own language. It should be borne in mind that most words have many different meanings, the exact definition of each one of which is very difficult. The full meaning of a word can only become unfolded to the learner after he has met it in a great number of different contexts and heard it used in a great number of different sentences. Philologists admit that the most important of all the associations a word has is its *Gefühlswert*; with this, however, the learner can only become familiar through the practical use of the language; what is even more important, it can only be fully revealed to him by the *Gefühlston*—that is to say, in living

speech. The importance of *tone* as a factor in conveying meaning would be very hard to exaggerate.

In the higher forms, when more attention is paid to the critical study of literature, it will be necessary to deal more fully with the exact meanings of words, their associations, noble or common, their history, every circumstance in fact that can throw light on their artistic aptness in the passage under consideration. It may be well to point out that this involves no contradiction with what has just been said; to suppose otherwise would be to confuse two things wholly different—the aim of practical command and the study of literary art. Although these aims are distinct, the latter can be greatly assisted by the former. The critical sense is what the scholar mainly requires, but this critical sense needs to be based on the practical linguistic sense, which comes from familiarity with the spoken language. Indeed it is difficult to see how scholarship based on the critical sense alone, unsupported by a well-developed practical sense, can be anything but a specious pretence.

The person who has established direct connection between his thought and a foreign language is said to 'think' in the foreign language; this means that he is able to express his thoughts and feelings directly by means of the foreign idiom, without the intervention of his mother-tongue. It is obvious that nobody can be said to know a foreign tongue unless he is able to do this. It

follows that the establishment of the direct connection must be the aim of all teachers—except, indeed, those who approach the problem of teaching languages with the conviction that they cannot be taught! The final aim is not, therefore, really in dispute; it is merely a question of how it can best be attained, which is purely a matter of technical procedure.

The old method of teaching by translation from and into the foreign language never aimed at establishing the direct connection at all; the foreign language was learnt in terms of the mother tongue, that is to say, each new word or expression was labelled off with the corresponding word or expression in the language already known—*maison* was the French for *house*, *jardin* the French for *garden*, *il n'y a pas de quoi* the French for *don't mention it*. In so far as this method can be said to have pursued any definite aim at all, it was that of interpreting through the medium of the mother-tongue books written in the foreign language. It certainly did not include amongst its aims either purity of pronunciation or fluency of speech. The almost innumerable disadvantages of this method need scarcely be dwelt upon; the many gross misconceptions with regard to language and grammar which it conveyed to the young mind were, to the person with some reverence for truth, almost the most abhorrent feature of it, and would alone be sufficient to condemn it, were there any grounds whatever on which it could be defended. It did not lead to a practical command of the language,

because it never aimed at it; and even the proposition that translation is the best means of interpreting meaning is at least highly disputable.

There is, however, another and more moderate use of translation, by persons who do not fully accept the theory of the direct method, which may be admitted not wholly to exclude the possibility of the ultimate establishment of the direct connection. Whatever method we proceed by, it is clear that the learner must always *understand* the foreign language before he can *use* it. Now the teacher who adopts the plan of dispensing with the mother-tongue says, in effect, 'I can use the foreign language with such a degree of skill that from the situation, the intonations of my voice, the gestures of which I may make use, etc., etc., the meaning will be quite clear to the learner.' The teacher who distrusts his ability to do this, relies on translation to convey the meaning, and then presumably expects the pupil to set up direct connection between the meaning and the foreign sentence, the English rendering being allowed to fall into oblivion once it has served its purpose. Let *A* be the foreign language, *B* the English translation, and *C* the meaning. The 'direct' teacher professes to be able to give *A* and *C* together. The 'translator' gives *A*, then *B*, and so finally arrives at *C*, thus:

The teacher now assumes that the learner can establish direct connection between *C* and *A* for himself. This second operation may be represented as follows :

Having got so far, it is assumed that the connections from *A* to *B* and from *B* to *C* are forgotten, and the connections both from *C* to *A* and from *A* to *C* finally established. That this is psychologically *possible* can scarcely be doubted ; whether it can be recommended as a method for general adoption in schools is another matter. If the aim of establishing the direct connection is once admitted, the best that can be said for the translation method is that it is a curiously indirect way of achieving it ! For the teacher who can use it, the direct method is clearly the best.

The principle of teaching the foreign language through itself, of making it the language of the class-room, the only means of communication between the teacher and his class, is therefore thoroughly sound ; there remains the question of its practical application, which, as already remarked, may appear to the novice to present almost insuperable difficulties. The difficulties are, in reality, by no means so great as may appear, and many a teacher, beginning diffidently, has been truly

astonished at the success of his efforts—which was precisely the experience of the present writer. A few remarks on the more general aspects of the question may be made before bringing this chapter to a close, although it is, of course, a matter which will have to be treated much more fully before the writer's task is at an end.

The first elements of the foreign speech can be taught in connection with the common objects of the class-room; or if these should appear insufficient for the purpose, a wall-picture may be used. A large picture representing houses, gardens, fields, roads, children, animals, men, women, etc.—there are many such published for school use—will afford abundant material for conversation. The names of the objects in the class-room have, however, to be learnt sometime, for it will be necessary frequently to refer to them in the course of conversation; they may as well be learnt at once. We will suppose the teacher begins with these. He will proceed by pronouncing distinctly (e.g. in French) the name of each, until the members of the class can repeat the names after him quite correctly, both collectively and individually—*Voilà le pupitre, Voilà le tableau, Voilà la porte*, etc. (It is assumed, of course, that a careful training in phonetics has preceded these first attempts at conversation.) The pupil can now be brought to use these phrases in pointing out the objects: the master says, *Montrez le plafond*, and the pupil replies, pointing at the same time, *Voilà le plafond, monsieur*. Next, the teacher can teach

the phrase, *C'est la porte*; then, throwing an unmistakable note of interrogation into his voice, and pointing at the same time, he will ask, *Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?* and will have little difficulty in eliciting the answer, *C'est la porte, monsieur.* When these simple forms are quite familiar to the pupil, and have been applied to most things within reach, the teacher may vary the proceedings by pointing, e.g., to the door, and asking, *Est-ce le pupitre?* to which the answer will be, *Non, monsieur, c'est la porte*, etc. Having once made a start with work of this kind, it is only a matter of time and practice for the pupils to distinguish clearly between the definite and indefinite articles, between singular and plural, between *des* and *les*, between *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* and *Qui est-ce?* etc. Presently adjectives can be introduced; the teacher, indicating the objects, will say, *La table est ronde, la porte est ouverte*, etc., and in answering the questions, *Comment est la porte? Comment est le crayon?* etc., the pupil will learn to discriminate between the masculine and feminine forms of the adjectives. Similarly the class may be taught the familiar use of the commonest prepositions, by pointing out persons and things and indicating their positions: *le professeur est devant la classe, Georges est dans la classe, la fenêtre est derrière la classe*, etc.; the pupils will learn to answer questions beginning with *où* just as they have learnt to answer questions beginning with *comment*. For teaching the use of verbs we must rely on actions performed by the teacher or the pupils, or the occupations in which

the persons and animals on the pictures are engaged. But enough has been said to give a general idea of the main principle of the 'direct method': the plan is to explain new words and expressions by the use of these words and expressions which the pupils already know. *Le mur* can be pointed out, but we explain *blanc* by saying, *Blanc est le contraire de noir; noir*, again, could be explained by pointing out a black object—*Le chapeau est noir.* Again we can say, *La peur est un autre mot pour la crainte, pénible est un autre mot pour difficile,*[1] etc. The work undoubtedly calls for a certain kind of skill, but it is remarkable how this skill can be developed by practice. It is enough for the present to say that from these simple beginnings an accurate and complete knowledge of the foreign language may be built up, far better than by a system of translation. Finally it is not the least important recommendation of oral teaching that it makes the language lesson pleasant and calls forth the interest of the pupils.

[1] But we must not forget that there is a certain danger in calling two words synonyms, for they usually have not exactly the same meaning. It is a different thing to ask the pupil to express the meaning of a sentence in another way, which is often possible. This means that we should ask for synonymous sentences rather than for synonymous words.

CHAPTER VIII

COMPROMISES

It has been shown in the previous chapter that it is desirable to make the foreign language the language of the class-room, (1) in order to avoid mixing up two bases of articulation, (2) to avoid confusing the word-order, constructions, idioms, etc., of our own language with those of the foreign language, (3) because learning to speak the language is always the shortest road to learning to read and write it. And since command of the spoken language is also an important end in itself, we may add, fourthly, that its constant use in the class-room is the best—indeed the only—means of achieving this aim. For supposing the work is conducted in English: exercise in the spoken language will then, in so far as it is retained at all as one of the teacher's aims, be relegated, according to the usual practice in such circumstances, to ten minutes at the end of the lesson or to one 'conversation lesson' a week. Such half-hearted attempts at oral work invariably lead to results that are utterly negligible; from the point of view of the person who understands what can be accomplished and how it can be accomplished, they are

a waste of time. If we place oral work in the very forefront of our programme; if we frankly put before our pupils this object of being able to express themselves orally in the foreign tongue as an aim to be consciously and insistently prosecuted with all their powers of mind and body; the learner may then, with at least five lessons a week and a good teacher, attain, by dint of hard work, to a very fair command of the spoken language; to suppose that he can do the same in one-fifth of the time, when moreover all the circumstances suggest that the pursuit in which he is engaged is of quite secondary importance, is utterly absurd.

In certain schools it appears to be the custom to relegate oral work to the higher forms; this system is equally to be condemned, for the following reasons. (1) By the time a boy has reached the top of the school he will necessarily have become accustomed to attaching *some* pronunciation to the foreign words—*ex hypothesi*, a bad one; this will be exceedingly hard to eradicate. (2) In oral work, as in everything else, we must begin at the beginning; in our first steps in conversation we can talk only of the simplest matters; and youths who are on the verge of manhood will find very little interest in answering such questions as, *Où est le livre?* But in so far as they step beyond this and attempt to speak of the things that really do interest them, they are at once face to face with all the difficulties of the foreign speech and make so many mistakes that they are disheartened. Oral expression in a foreign tongue is a physical and

intellectual habit which must be slowly, laboriously, and methodically acquired. (3) In the Sixth Form the time should be devoted to studying the literature and institutions of the foreign country, not to acquiring the elements of the foreign speech, which should be done in the lower forms.

Another suggested solution is that our pupils after leaving school should spend some time in the foreign country (or countries): this, however, although desirable, may not in many cases be practicable. Moreover, 'going abroad' by no means always produces the magical results that some people seem to expect—as though the air of the foreign country possessed the marvellous property of rendering the acquisition of the foreign language easier! The one distinct advantage of going abroad is that our opportunities for hearing and speaking the language are greatly increased; but apart from this, the difficulties with which we struggle at home will meet us equally there; there, as here, pronunciation can be satisfactorily mastered only by severe phonetic training; but the youth who goes abroad usually goes to live in a family, gets cut off from any possibility of such training, and indeed only too often from all systematic teaching. The advantages, therefore, to be derived from a sojourn in the foreign country depend almost entirely on the previous training which the learner has received. If he has already made a good beginning with oral work,[1] he may

[1] Viele Sprachstudierende suchen ihre Aussprache durch einen Aufenthalt in dem betreffenden fremden Lande zu ver-

make very remarkable progress; if he has made no such beginning, but goes abroad 'to pick up' the language, as the saying is, he will probably make very little progress.

The most satisfactory way of enabling our pupils to achieve command of the spoken language is therefore to use it constantly in class; moreover, by adopting this course we are making most directly for our other ends also; having once learnt to converse freely in the language, they know it, they possess it; for the spoken language *is the language*; to learn its orthographical system thereafter is in comparison only a trifling task.

The principles of teaching foreign languages orally without the aid of 'grammatical rules' or the intervention of the mother-tongue were first preached by eminent European scholars whose views were based on profound knowledge. They were first put into practice by men who, inspired by their writings, brought to the work that clearness of conviction and directness of aim which are the essential qualities for success in everything. But in the course of time these views, or rather an echo of these views, finally reached other teachers, who, lacking the knowledge, lacked conviction, and lacking conviction, lacked courage; they lacked the courage to step off what seemed to them to be the safe ground of conventional grammar and

vollkommnen. Man hat indessen allen Grund, das Hoffnungslose dieses Bestrebens zu betonen, *falls der Studierende nicht eine gewisse phonetische Vorbildung mitbringt.*—Flagstad, *Psychologie der Sprachpädagogik*, p. 59.

therefore fell back upon compromise. So arose what may be called the 'middle method,' which represents a half-way position between the principle of the 'direct method' and the old grammar-translation system. 'We try,' said a headmaster to the writer, 'to preserve the advantages of both methods.' The actual result is that scarcely any method leads to so little practical command of the language. How could it be otherwise when the wretched pupils are being continually plunged backwards and forwards from one language to another, never knowing in what idiom their thoughts are to flow, or to what speech-basis they are to hold? And as for the importance of retaining conventional grammar, for which scholars like Jespersen, Viëtor, Passy, and Sweet have never expressed anything but the contempt it deserves, we have already seen (Chapter V) what value to set on it. Not very long ago a friend—who is at the same time a distinguished university teacher and well qualified to speak with authority on the subject—writing to me on this very question, expressed it as his only hope *that grammar might for the present be banished from the schools altogether*! I do not, myself, take so despairing a view. I believe—as I hope to show—that side by side with good oral teaching we shall be able to teach our pupils the elementary principles of grammar through the medium of the foreign tongue; above all, that we shall abstain from teaching them, either directly or by implication, what in the hands of a good university teacher they would have to unlearn.

Meanwhile it is obvious that the compromise of the 'middle method' does not indicate our line of progress.[1]

[1] In 1882 Viëtor published, under the pen-name 'Quousque Tandem,' his famous little book, *Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren!* It was one of the first attacks on the old translation system. Republishing it in a third edition in 1905 he already notes the appearance of this 'Middle method'—'*die vermittelnde Methode*' he calls it—and refers to it in the following words: 'Die Lehrpläne haben . . . den Wünschen der "Reform" weitgehendes Entgegenkommen gezeigt. Heute herrscht daher eine zwischen der "alten" und der "neuen" (der Reform) "vermittelnde" Methode. . . . Ich gestehe, dass ich in dieser Vermittlung viel mehr Altes als Neues finde. Statt der fremden Einzelsätze hinter den Regeln haben wir vor ihnen ein zusammenhängendes Stück, das aber so grammatisch-methodisch ist wie die früheren Sätze. Die zugehörigen deutschen Stücke sind der gleichen Natur. Mit den Vokabeln ist es wie sonst.' (p. 42.)

CHAPTER IX

GRAMMAR AND THE 'DIRECT METHOD'

THE main principles at which we have so far arrived may now be restated in the following form :

1. The study of a living language should in all cases begin with a thorough and careful training in practical phonetics.

2. If our aim is to learn to read, write, and speak a living language, we shall be adopting not only the most natural, but also the most direct and expeditious method of achieving these three ends by concentrating in the first place on the mastery of the spoken tongue.

3. The foreign language should be made the language of the class-room, and the use of the mother-tongue should, so far as possible, be dispensed with during the lesson.

We must now consider what part grammar is to play in this scheme.

It has already been pointed out that acceptance of the principle of the 'direct method' does not

involve—unless possibly by implication—acceptance of the principle that phonetic training is necessary. The 'direct method' takes equally little account of grammar; being, as it is in its essence, a system of acquiring a language by dint of using it, it may in fact be said frankly to ignore grammar.[1]

The question therefore arises—if it is possible to acquire a language merely by practice in using it, what reason is there for taking any account of grammar at all? The answer to this question has already been indicated at the beginning of this book, where it was laid down that practical utility alone cannot be regarded as a sufficient ground for claiming for our subject a considerable share of the time-table of the secondary school, but that it is as much our duty to teach our pupils right notions about the nature of language as it is the duty of the chemistry master to teach them right notions about the nature of matter.

But granted that it is the duty of the school to dispel existing misconceptions about language and

[1] It is quite true that most protagonists of oral teaching have at the same time a very keen sense of the importance of grammar. The two statements do not conflict. The confusion arises (as has been already pointed out) from the habit of speaking of the 'direct method' as though it embraced all aspects of language teaching. At the risk of being wearisome I must repeat that this is not so. I believe certain principles of language teaching are discoverable which are theoretically and practically sound, and that this is one of them. But the matter has many aspects, and the sooner we give up talking of this or that method very much as one might talk of So-and-so's method of serving at tennis, the better.

grammar [1] and foster in their place an enlightened outlook on the subject, it may be objected that this surely should be done rather in connection with the teaching of English. While the schools fail to insist on a scientific consideration of the facts of our own language, why should the modern language teacher go preaching in the wilderness? Is there even much hope that, so long as false views are imparted, either directly or by implication, in the English lesson, the efforts of the modern language teacher will meet with much success? For English grammar certainly receives very little attention in our schools at present: when it is not wholly neglected it seems to degenerate into an attempt to bully the pupils into saying *the Misses Brown* instead of *the Miss Browns.*[2] The traditional exercise of 'parsing and analysis' is still kept up, but it is in most cases carried on in a mechanical and unintelligent manner; it appears to lack clear principles and a definite aim, and is therefore without that power to stimulate the mind possessed by all real knowledge rightly presented; indeed one more than suspects that it has its origin

[1] 'People would laugh to scorn the educated man who did not know what gravity is. Yet every day one can hear opinions expressed on the phenomena of language which are, properly regarded, just as archaic as would be ignorance of Newton's great discovery.'—R. A. Williams in *Modern Language Teaching* for February, 1907.

[2] I cannot forbear to quote Professor Wyld's remark on this subject: 'Even the most pedantic speaker will break down if he has to mention two sisters-in-law of the same name as [ðə tū misiz braun] and must needs fall back on [ðə tū misiz braunz].'—*Elementary Lessons in English Grammar*, p. 69.

less in any solicitude for the study of English than in a belief that it is a useful adjunct to the system of learning other languages by a process of translation! Writing in 1882, Viëtor described the teaching of German grammar in German schools as *eine nutzlose Quälerei*,[1] and he repeated the charge in 1905 (*Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren*, p. 5). It is doubtful whether the way English grammar is taught to English children can be spoken of in much more complimentary terms.[2] *Nutzlos* it certainly is, and if it is not *eine Quälerei*, it is no doubt due to the fact that the healthy instincts of British boys lead them to put up a pretty stubborn resistance to our attempts to miseducate them; it is, however, something much worse—it is dull. Nor is there much ground for hoping for an immediate improvement. The questions set in English grammar in school examinations are almost without

[1] Anatole France is not often quoted in books on method, but I venture to put on record the following remark found in *Pierre Nozière*: 'Je tiens pour un malheur public qu'il y ait des grammaires françaises. . . . Etudier comme une langue morte la langue vivante: quel contresens!'

[2] 'What I was taught at school to regard as analysis was a more or less mechanical exercise consisting in the application of a pseudo-grammatical terminology to the dismemberment of sentences—an exercise, be it remarked, which in no wise gave me a clear notion of the meaning either of the terms used for this purpose, or of the true nature of grammatical phenomena. . . . The experience I have gathered in lecturing to and examining University students fresh from school does not indeed give me any ground to believe that [matters have improved]. The grammatical notions of practically all are just as confused and indefinite as was to be expected, if they had been put through the same useless exertions as I expended myself at school.'—R. A. Williams, *Uniformity in Languages and Language Study*, p. 17.

exception of the conventional kind, and the books most widely in use seem to be produced for no better purpose than to supply the conventional answer. When we come to realize the vital importance of good education, we shall then perhaps see to it that nobody fulfils any function in connection therewith unless he possesses special qualifications and fitness to perform that function; and we may even insist that the production of books for use in schools shall be governed by other than purely commercial considerations—for at present school-books seem to be brought out and 'pushed' on very much the same lines as patent medicines. Yet nobody can complain of the lack of a suitable introduction to the elements of English grammar so long as Professor Wyld's *Elementary Lessons in English Grammar* is available. And for more advanced work there is Sweet's *New English Grammar*. What is important, however, is not that a great deal of grammar should be taught, but that what is taught should be sound.

Meanwhile the modern language teacher can only do his best. If his pupils are taught elsewhere that words are composed of letters and that the study of sounds is a waste of time, he must only seek to make himself an interesting heretic and pray that the truth may prevail.

The division of grammar into descriptive and explanatory has already been referred to (Chapter III). The question arises whether explanatory grammar should be taught in schools. The best answer is that while it is the function

of the school mainly to teach descriptive grammar, it is in every way an advantage if time can be found to introduce the pupils to the elements of historical grammar as well in the highest Forms. Descriptive grammar ought to be taught; if in teaching it the teacher is able to awaken his pupils' interest in the historical growth of the language also, so much the better.

What do we mean by descriptive grammar? Language presents three sets of phenomena for our consideration—sounds (both isolated and in connected speech), words, and sentences: the study of these being referred to—in so far as they can be kept separate—as phonology, accidence, and syntax.

Pupils taught by the oral method have the advantage of getting, through their phonetic training, that introduction to the elements of phonology which other pupils entirely miss: they study speech-sounds, intonation, stress, and come to a right appreciation of the importance of the spoken word; they may easily be brought to see the influence of sound-change on accidence; and if the interest in these phenomena is kept up throughout, they will be able later on to bring their knowledge to bear on the study of metrics.

But when the accusation is brought, as it has been brought time and again, that oral teaching tends to a neglect of grammar, it is not phonology that the persons who make this charge are likely to have in mind; such persons are not given to airing their views on this aspect of grammar. What they

are thinking of is the mass of rules, paradigms, and examples grouped in most grammar books under the headings of accidence and syntax. Let us now consider to what extent these two remaining parts of grammar are neglected.

The pupil who has attained to a fluent command of the foreign tongue by dint of practice is of necessity already familiar with its word-forms and sentence construction; he knows them, that is to say, *to use them*; he runs no risk of saying *Les généraux avaient beaucoup de chevals* instead of *Les généraux avaient beaucoup de chevaux*, or *J'ai allé à la ville* instead of *Je suis allé à la ville*, or of using *Das Fenster war geöffnet* when he should have used *Das Fenster wurde geöffnet*. But in saying that he knows the constructions of the language, it is important to bear in mind that he only knows them in the sense in which a good English speaker, through frequenting circles where good English is spoken, knows the constructions of English. We have no right to call such knowledge grammatical knowledge; grammatical knowledge only arises out of conscious reflection and generalisation about the phenomena already familiar.

Such treatment of the linguistic material mastered is not neglected by those teachers who use oral methods; so far is this from being the case, that it appears in most cases to be overdone, especially in the sense that it is begun too soon. No sooner has the pupil met a couple of French nouns like *cheval* and *général*, with plurals *chevaux* and *généraux*, than the teacher undertakes to base

on this slender evidence a rule that nouns in [al] form their plurals by changing [al] into [o]. In extreme cases this simply degenerates into the old teaching by means of rules. In some cases the process is glorified with the name of 'inductive grammar,' which is most reprehensible, for to teach the pupil to found an induction on insufficient material is to give him wrong notions with regard to scientific method, which is a more important thing than either fluency or grammar; scientific method, indeed, is just what grammar, rightly treated, may teach.

This undue haste to arrive at grammatical classification appears to be traceable to a vague belief that the language is learnt for the sake of its grammar, and that the amount of grammar learnt is the measure of the progress that has been made; a view which is unfortunately still encouraged by the habit of setting grammar questions in junior school examinations.[1] There is also very likely a lingering belief amongst some teachers in the magical properties of the 'grammatical rule,' which when once discovered is supposed to safeguard the learner from further error. It has already been shown that this view is erroneous.

It would be sheer pedantry to withhold from

[1] Several years ago the writer proposed a resolution at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association to the effect that the practice of setting 'grammar' questions in examinations for junior pupils was wholly reprehensible. It was carried with only one dissentient. As the one dissentient has probably since been converted, examining bodies might now decently give up the practice.

the pupil the advantage of a grammatical rule, if one could be sure that the knowledge might be helpful to him. No doubt, where the usage of the foreign language is widely different from that of the mother-tongue—the agreement of the adjective with the noun in French is an example—it may be desirable that the pupil's attention should be specially drawn to it, since he must finally come to feel the necessity for this agreement, which does not take place in his own tongue. Of course he can only come to feel this by dint of practice. But the double fallacy to be exposed is (1) that to break a rule proves the pupil to be ignorant of that rule, and (2) that knowledge of a rule safeguards him from breaking it. *No learner ever gains sure command over any form or construction of a foreign language by any other means than the frequent use of that form or construction.* It is the firm conviction of the writer—based, it may be said, on considerable experience—that if a pupil should say, e.g. [ʃval] instead of [ʃvo], the teacher will help him more by simply repeating, or still better by getting one of his class-mates to repeat, the right form, than by falling back on the formal enunciation of any rule. And it is for this reason that it is recommended to plunge the learner into the foreign language, to lead him to speak it and read it and hear it; for in this way he absorbs it, not by his reason alone, but by his *senses* as well.

The practical mastery of the foreign idiom as an instrument of thought and the consideration of its phenomena from the detached standpoint of the

grammarian are therefore two entirely distinct things.

To sum up then: the discussion and classification of the linguistic material mastered may be undertaken when a sufficiency of such material has become the familiar property of the pupil; but the teacher will, generally speaking, be well advised to defer such grammatical discussions until the pupil has attained to some measure of real command over the foreign tongue. At a still later stage a grammar-book written in the foreign language may be introduced and studied systematically just like any of the other works that are being read: grammar, so treated, presents no greater difficulties of vocabulary than literature, or political history, or prosody, or any of the other subjects with which a good Sixth Form may be expected to occupy itself.

CHAPTER X

WHAT IS POSSIBLE

THERE is scarcely any undertaking the difficulties of which are so generally underrated as the acquiring of a foreign language.[1] This question the general public do not understand and cannot be expected to understand; what is regrettable is that it is scarcely better understood by many

[1] It is important to realize that no change in method can possibly remove all these difficulties. It is necessary to insist on the fact that learning a language always involves hard work, for many writers have laid so much emphasis on the interest and pleasure that may accompany lessons given on modern lines that the notion seems to have spread that the use of such methods means the absence of all effort on the part of the pupil. Nothing could be more false. No doubt greater interest is called forth; and where children are busily engaged in pursuit of an aim that they can understand, they will always be happy and bright-eyed. But attention has already been drawn to the difficulties presented by pronunciation and to the very considerable volitional effort required from the pupil. Flagstad in his work on method (German translation) makes the following remark on the subject: 'Es wäre vollkommen falsch, den modernen Sprachunterricht als eine blosse Spielerei zu betrachten, infolge deren eine unwillkürliche Sprachaneignung stattfinden sollte. In Wirklichkeit sind die Anforderungen an die Willenskraft in jeder Hinsicht gesteigert und beziehen sich teils auf den Unterricht und dessen Stoff im allgemeinen, teils auf die Aufmerksamkeit und auf eine grössere selbständige Aktivität des Schülers' (*Psychologie der Sprachpädagogik*, p. 348).

persons in positions of educational influence and responsibility. The result is that the modern language teacher is often set to do his work under conditions which render it impossible for him to succeed; and to this cause must undoubtedly be ascribed a considerable share of the bad work that is at present done in our schools.

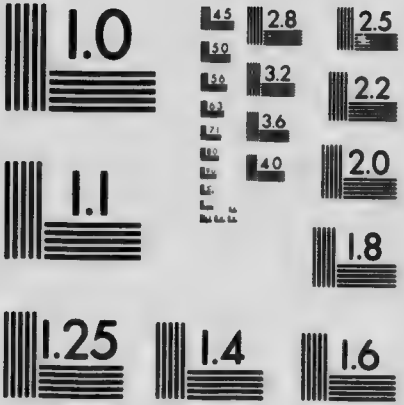
The circumstances in which the teaching is carried on are not, of course, strictly a question of method, and do not in any way affect the rightness or wrongness of the principles we seek to apply; but since unfavourable teaching conditions can render the efforts of even the best teacher wholly or partly ineffectual, it seems necessary to make some remarks here on what appear to be at least the main aspects of the problem.

The following are the most important factors that have to be taken into account: 1. The qualifications of the teacher. 2. The amount of time allotted to the foreign language. 3. The size of the class. 4. The number of foreign languages studied. 5. The classification of the pupils. 6. The suitability of the class-room.

1. *The qualifications of the teacher.*—Nobody is qualified to teach a foreign language unless he speaks it with fluency and readiness, and has had a thorough *practical* training in phonetics—not only in the sounds of the language to be taught, but also in those of the pupils' own mother-tongue; for, as has already been pointed out, it is necessary to know not only what to aim at, but also what to avoid. He should also, of course, be familiar

with the literature, history, and civilization of the foreign country; but it is necessary here to emphasize the importance of a ready command of the language and phonetic training, since these are qualifications which, as things are at present, the obtaining of a University degree in modern languages by no means ensures. When Universities realise that it is they who must provide the schools with modern language masters, when they understand the importance of this work and the qualifications necessary for it, then we shall be on the way to having modern languages well taught.

2. *The question of time.*—Once it is agreed that a language must be acquired by using it, the amount of time at our disposal immediately becomes a most important factor. In an earlier part of this book a remark was quoted from the eminent philologist, W. D. Whitney, to the effect that the process by which we acquire a foreign language is precisely the same as that by which we have acquired our own mother-tongue. This statement, in the sense in which Whitney made it, is perfectly true; we can only gain command of a language as an instrument of thought by practice in using it. But we must bear in mind that the speech-habits already formed (i.e. in the mother-tongue) are a considerable hindrance to the learner in acquiring new speech-habits—the enemy of the language to be learnt is the language already in possession (see Chapter IV, p. 21); also, the circumstances under which a language is taught at school can never be identical with those under



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

which we learn our own mother-tongue in the nursery and the home. Broadly speaking, the one process may be said to be natural, the other artificial. Pronunciation is a case in point. The English child of eleven or twelve has generally arrived at a fair command of the sounds of his own language.[1] To this he has attained through years of effort and practice, beginning in the cradle, where he learns very gradually to identify and to pronounce, first, the easiest speech-sounds, then, the more difficult, confusing at first invariably one consonant with another, but gradually mastering them all, his education being conducted and his efforts encouraged by nurse and mother and all his admiring friends. For all this there is obviously no time in the class-room; we must take the short-cut of phonetics, for which the pupil, being now of maturer age, is moreover better fitted. And the same applies to the attainment of fluency, which cannot be arrived at in the class-room by mere haphazard talk—though haphazard talk may at times have its place; generally speaking, every-thing done in the modern language lesson must be done with a purpose, everything must be arranged systematically, though the purpose and the system

[1] It is well known that many persons never master all the sounds of their own language; and it was for this reason that Sweet prophesied many years ago that the time would come when every nurse would be expected to have a knowledge of phonetics! It is, moreover, known to inspectors that there are schools where the pupils' pronunciation of (e.g.) French—being founded on phonetic training—is purer than their pronunciation of English, their mother-tongue!

will be more apparent to the master than to his pupils. And this is so because the *time* at our disposal is limited; instead of years and days we have terms and 'lessons.' Our time being short, the whole art of language teaching consists, in a sense, in a right use of it.[1]

If our class is composed of twenty pupils, and the lesson lasts forty minutes, a very simple calculation reveals how many minutes' conversation may fall to the lot of each pupil. These cold figures may appear disheartening; in reality, assuming that the class gets a lesson every day, such conditions would be exceedingly favourable, and should make possible very rapid progress; for it must be remembered that while one pupil is answering a question, the others should not be idle, *but should be forming the answer to the question in their own minds*; secondly, a considerable use may be made of 'chorus work,' especially at the beginning, all the pupils being trained to answer together in one voice, as it were. (The excessive use of this device would, however, be likely to lead to an unnatural and 'sing-song' form of speech.) The number of weekly lessons given to the language is of great importance. At the beginning it is desirable that the pupils should have a lesson each day; and it is much better to have one half an hour each day than to have a whole hour three or four times a week. A lesson lasting a whole hour is usually too long for young children—they become 'fidgety.'

[1] On this subject see a very interesting article by the late M. P. Andrews in *Modern Language Teaching* for 1905, p. 52.

What is the minimum allowance of time which makes a good start in a foreign language possible? It is obvious that we must look to experience alone for the answer to this question. According to the writer's experience the answer is: Five lessons a week. After two or three years it is possible to reduce this to four and still make considerable progress; but it must not be forgotten that if we are to expect anything like the same work from a Modern Sixth as we traditionally expect from a Classical Sixth, the same amount of time must be allotted to the work

3. *The size of the Class.*—The question of the size of the class is evidently complementary to that of allowance of time. Twenty is a good size. Twenty-five is the largest number of pupils that should be taught together. When we pass this limit, good oral work becomes impossible, or can only be achieved at an expenditure of effort on the part of the teacher which it is unreasonable to expect him to make, and which as a rule he can only make at the expense of his own health.[1]

4. *The number of languages attempted.*—It follows from what has been said that there must be a limit to the number of languages learnt, unless other important subjects—English, mathematics, science—are to be grossly neglected. The question of how many languages should be attempted obvi-

[1] A modern language teacher in France works fifteen hours a week (according to the regulations of the Ministry of Public Instruction). In England the average would be about twenty-three hours a week.

ously raises the whole problem of the time-table; generally speaking, it will not be found possible at school to gain a useful knowledge of more than two foreign languages—*even by neglecting other subjects*; and there is little doubt that many boys are working at two or even three languages at present who would be much better advised to concentrate their attention on one. The common mistake is to attempt too much. Where two languages are attempted, they should never be begun at the same time; when this is done, it generally leads to confusion and the failure to acquire linguistic sense in either. In such cases it is better to adopt the *intensive* method. Seven or eight lessons a week are given to the first language for a year, or, better still, for two years, if this is possible; at the end of this time, when the class has made a good start, the number of lessons is reduced, and the second language is now begun on the same intensive plan.[1]

The practice of setting schoolboys to learn an excessive number of languages is not only absurd in view of what anybody who really understands the question knows to be possible, but it is most

[1] I shall be told that seven or eight lessons a week are out of the question owing to the claims of other subjects. I am concerned for the moment with the facts of language teaching; the time-table can be settled afterwards. Besides, there is many a boy at present working at two foreign languages, with five lessons a week for each, and not making much progress at either; if he were relieved of one, he might have seven lessons a week for the other, *and really learn it*; and there would actually be *a gain of three lessons a week*, which could be used for teaching other subjects.

harmful from the point of view of the boy's general education. 'It would be interesting to know'—says Professor Williams—'whether the constantly recurring grumble about "bad English" is not, in part at least, owing to the manner in which the average boy's linguistic faculty is overstrained, not to say debauched, by teaching him more of foreign languages than he can mentally digest.' [1]

5. *The classification of the pupils.*—If, when a class has been taught orally for a year, a new pupil is introduced to it who has done neither phonetics nor oral work, then a very difficult problem arises. The new-comer can neither pronounce correctly nor understand what is said. The teacher must choose one of two courses: either he must ignore the boy entirely, in which case he will learn nothing, or else he must give him special attention in class with the object of bringing him into line with the others. If he adopts the latter alternative, which is the more likely of the two, he will really be trying to teach this youth in a short space of time what it took him a year's hard work to teach the rest of the class; in seven cases out of ten his efforts will meet with very indifferent success; and whether he is successful or not, the progress of the Form—and this is the main point—will be very seriously retarded. (Where such cases unavoidably occur, and where the teacher's time is fully occupied, it will be found a good plan to enlist the help of the more advanced members of the Form. In dealing with badly classified Forms,

[1] *Modern Language Teaching*, 1906, p. 109.

it has been the writer's custom to give each backward pupil a 'professeur' in the shape of a classmate out of the front rank of the Form, whose duty it is to teach him any sounds he has not mastered and give him such judicious help and encouragement as may gradually bring him up to the general standard.) This illustration will serve to show the importance of a careful classification of pupils, wherever oral methods of teaching are in use.

There is, however, another classification of pupils which it is high time for us to make, namely, into those that can learn two foreign languages, those that can learn one, and those that can learn none.

There are more things taught at school than languages, and the modern language teacher can scarcely expect the classes to be arranged for his purposes alone. But while this has to be admitted, the fact still remains that a good deal more can be done in this direction than is done at present.

6. *The class-room.*—There are many things that the class-room ought to be; but from the point of view of the modern language master it should be above all things *quiet.* Extraneous noise may reduce the value of the work done by anything from 5 to 50 per cent., according to the degree of the nuisance; imperfect audition leads on the one hand to error, and on the other to loss of time in repeating what has been said; intonation suffers—since the voice has to be strained—and consequently other things suffer also; the nervous wear and tear involved is detrimental to both teacher and pupils, and it becomes impossible under such conditions

either to create or preserve that pleasant atmosphere in which human dialogue ought to be conducted. A class-room which is constantly flooded with the roar of traffic from a neighbouring thoroughfare should never be used for the teaching of modern languages—or for teaching anything else. The room should be well lighted; there should be a sufficiency of blackboard space; also a plentiful supply of such necessary things as sound-charts, maps of the foreign country, wall-pictures, etc.

It is obvious from what has been said that the co-ordination of the modern language teaching throughout a school is a matter of the greatest importance: this implies the necessity for a capable chief of department, charged with the duties of organization, supervision, guidance of junior teachers, etc. It is well for the members of the modern language staff to meet frequently to discuss questions arising out of their work. The teacher should have opportunities for visiting other schools, attending lectures, etc.; and should occasionally be given a term off, with full pay, for the purpose of visiting the foreign country.

In venturing on the foregoing remarks I have been guided by two chief motives: in the first place, I am well aware that in many cases the methods of teaching modern languages are blamed for the results achieved where the conditions under which the teaching is carried on are alone responsible; in the second place, I am convinced that we are by this time in possession of a sufficiency of experience in the matter to enable us to arrive at quite clear

notions as to what is, generally speaking, possible. What I have said is founded on wide experience of various kinds and much reflection; I owe much also to discussions of the different aspects of this subject with others; and I am convinced that the practical experience of those teachers who have taken their work most seriously will be in agreement with the views I have expressed.

If the teaching of modern languages in our schools is to be improved, it will be necessary for us to consider not only the methods of teaching we should use, but also *the conditions under which it is possible for these methods to be successfully employed.*

PART II: PRACTICE

CHAPTER I

PRONUNCIATION

THERE is scarcely anything so striking about children as their love of knowledge. When they appear idle or indifferent, it is almost invariably due to the fact that the knowledge we seek to impart is either not rightly presented, or it is presented at the wrong time. It is not reasonable, for example, to expect young children to take a deep interest in highly abstract ideas. The learning of a foreign language, however, if the principles laid down in the foregoing chapters are adhered to, is a form of school-work which need not fail to arouse interest and enthusiasm. The kind of effort that it calls for is in keeping with the stage of development at which the pupils have arrived, being at first very largely physical: there is the muscular exercise of mastering the foreign speech-sounds, a wholly salutary form of exercise for children of eleven or twelve, involving as it does the control of their vocal organs, the regulation of breathing, etc.; while at the same time such features of the foreign language as the conjugation of verbs may

be acquired in a concrete manner, the part of the verb used being accompanied by the corresponding action. Thus the regular verb can be acquired by going through a series of actions, such as *je vais fermer la porte, je ferme la porte, j'ai fermé la porte,* etc.; the reflexive verb *se lever* in the same way, in which all persons and numbers can be introduced; this introduces a dramatic element into the teaching which arouses keen interest and fixes more firmly in the pupil's mind the meaning of the words used. It is physiologically desirable that young people should be given as much freedom of movement as possible; here, movement and action are not only not a hindrance, but are actually favourable to progress. Moreover, it is a remarkable fact in the psychology of language that deep interest and most forms of emotional excitement, are conducive to the flow of speech.[1] It is therefore a most fortunate circumstance that the kind of oral teaching which from the purely linguistic standpoint appears to be desirable in the early stages, is to be recommended on many other educational grounds also; and those teachers who are inclined to insist on hard conscientious work, even in the case of beginners, have the consolation of knowing that the effort which they demand from the pupil is precisely the kind of effort which at this age it is good for him to make. A class of beginners, if

[1] Diese Tatsache, dass die Heiterkeit den Sprachmechanismus günstig beeinflusst, darf beim Sprachunterricht nicht unterschätzt werden.—Flagstad, *Psychologie der Sprachpädagogik*, p. 149.

rightly handled, will seldom fail to contribute plenty of spontaneous effort; whatever may be the case with other teachers, the modern language teacher can therefore have no excuse for failing to make the early teaching of his subject interesting.

We will assume now that we have to deal with a class of beginners, numbering not more than twenty-five, of the average age of eleven or twelve, and that not less than five lessons a week are to be allotted to the foreign language, which we may assume to be French. Our first aims will now be to teach (1) the pronunciation of the language and (2) the fluent use of it. These two aims are not strictly separate. In a very true sense, there is no pronunciation without conversation, for it is in fluent speech alone, where the foreign sounds enter into endless combinations with each other and undergo various changes, that familiar command of them may be attained. But if it is true that there is no pronunciation without conversation, it is still more true that there is no conversation without pronunciation; it is impossible to enter on any conversation whatever without previous training in the sounds, and it will be found to be no waste of time to spend two, three, or more weeks (according to the type of pupils we are dealing with) in preparatory phonetic training, before any formal conversation is attempted.

It is a profound mistake to try to go too fast at the beginning. It is generally a good plan to discuss with the pupils beforehand what they are

going to do and the aims they are to set before themselves. Their notions about language will usually be found to involve many misconceptions which ought to be dispelled. If the question is asked, 'What are words composed of?' the answer in nine cases out of ten will be, 'Letters.' They must be brought to see that words are really composed of sounds; the imperfection of orthographic writing can be illustrated by examples from our own language; and this will lead by obvious steps to the question of a phonetic alphabet. It will be well if they are brought at the same time to see what learning a language really means; that they must learn it, if at all, by their own efforts—that it is something they are going to learn *to do*. This may be done by asking them to consider the case, e.g., of a missionary called upon to master the language of an African tribe: how would he proceed, and what would his difficulties be? In this connexion the reduction to writing of savage languages may be discussed; it will prepare the way for the pupils' phonetic studies. To enlist their interest in these matters beforehand is to win half the battle.

Having made clear to the class the manner in which speech-sounds are produced by the vocal organs, we may now make a beginning with the vowels. In teaching the vowels the pupil's attention must be directed to three chief considerations: the position of the tongue, the angle of the jaws, and the shape of the lips. Most children will at first have very little notion of what they do with

their tongue in pronouncing any given sound: they must become *conscious* of its movements—that it is drawn back for [u], thrust forward for [i], etc. This consciousness may in some cases take some little time to develop; its development is obviously necessary if the pupil is to benefit from the instructions to be given him. He will have a similar difficulty in judging the relative degrees to which his jaws must be opened for the different vowels [i], [e], [ɛ], [a]; sureness can only come by practice. Control of the lips presents peculiar difficulties; the circular lip-muscle, which can be contracted or expanded at will, is but little used in speaking English; the rounded vowels in French, however, demand a very considerable exercise of this muscle, comparable in some degree to the kind of effort that has to be made in whistling. Any muscular action performed for the first time is in a sense almost painful; it can only become easy and 'natural' by constant practice. The front rounded vowels are particularly difficult to master, the combination of advanced tongue and rounded lips being so different from anything to which we are accustomed in English. Each pupil should provide himself with a small pocket mirror by which he can compare the shape of his lips with those of the teacher, on which he should be trained to fix his attention. The use of a mirror is almost indispensable if we are to fix in the pupil's mind the exact nature of each sound. A sound-chart should hang constantly in front of the class: the pupils should be taught to attach special significance to

the position given to each sound on the chart. (I have found it a good plan to have an English sound-chart hanging beside it: when an English sound is pronounced by mistake, it can then be pointed out—preferably by one of the pupils—and afterwards the French sound for which it was substituted.) The plan of the sound-chart will remind the pupils that the so-called 'abnormal' vowels [y] [ø] and [œ] are only the rounded forms of [i] [e] and [ɛ]. The size of the lip-opening for [y] should be such as just to admit the sharpened end of a lead-pencil; that for [ø] should just admit the unsharpened end; that for [œ] will generally be indicated by the end of the middle finger. The lip-rounding for [ə] and (ɔ] should be insisted on, otherwise very un-French sounds will result. In teaching the nasal vowels, it must be made clear that they are vowels and nothing else: English children tend to pronounce a vowel plus a consonant. The back of the tongue must not touch the palate. Here again the mirror will be useful.

The exact nature of each of the vowels having been made clear, diligent practice must follow. The teacher may stand by the sound-chart and call on the pupils to pronounce the sounds one by one as he points to them; or the teacher may pronounce the sounds and the pupils may be asked to point them out on the chart, or to write them down from his dictation.

Meanwhile the description of the consonants may be proceeded with. The 'stops' must be

taken gently; they are not so explosive as in English. If a lighted match be held before the lips in pronouncing the English word 'papa,' it will be extinguished; not so in pronouncing the corresponding French word. In the phrase [œ̃ ptit d̃fɑ̃] the [p] is little more than the shutting and opening of the lips. To speak French as some persons do, coming down on each sound with all their force, can only be compared to banging on a piano with one's fist.

The French [l] calls for special attenton: the main difference of articulation is that in pronouncing the English sound *the back of the tongue is raised*; this must not be done in French, and the tongue must go well forward so as to touch the top front teeth. Out of a class of twenty-five, three or four will usually be found who will profess inability to trill the [r]. The nature of the trill can be explained, but this may not suffice; most pupils, however, can be brought to produce some kind of a trill sooner or later by constant effort. Where they fail to produce the lingual [r] they find it possible in many cases to pronounce the uvular [R]; this can often be achieved by gargling—first with water, then without. [ɲ] is best articulated by placing the tip of the tongue at the roots of the *lower* front teeth and pressing it well forward against the hard palate.

Certain French vowels when followed immediately by other vowels become changed into consonants: thus [u] becomes [w], [i] becomes [j], [y] becomes [ɥ]. The sound [w] presents no particular

difficulty for English children. The change of [i] into [j], however, is characteristic, and particular attention should be drawn to it; it is important that words like *bien* [bjɛ̃] and *lion* [ljɔ̃] should be seen to be composed of only one syllable. [ɥ] presents great difficulty for a beginner; the best rule is to pronounce it as a vowel at first—thus *puis* should be pronounced [pyi]; with the attainment of natural fluency, the [y] will become a consonant imperceptibly. The chief danger is that the pupil through carelessness may adopt the path of least resistance and say [pwi]; he must be brought to see that, e.g., *Louis* [lwi] and *lui* [lɥi] are absolutely distinct words.

It is very important that final voiced consonants in French—especially [ʒ] [z] [v]—should be fully voiced; in English in such cases the vocal chords cease to vibrate before the sound is finished.

The class may now be given practice in analysing words into their component sounds. Words may be dictated to them to be written down in phonetic characters. They may be taught the names of the days of the week, the months, the seasons, and the French numbers: this provides good practice in pronunciation and is moreover useful. In choosing material for further phonetic practice, those words and phrases may be introduced which will be in frequent use as soon as conversation is attempted. Such words as *livre*, *cahier*, *plume*, *encrier*, *pupitre*, etc., should be taught at once; phrases such as *C'est un encrier*, *C'est une plume*, *Voilà la fenêtre*, *monsieur*, which will be frequently

used, may usefully be practised beforehand. The class may also be made familiar with the commonest orders—*Levez-vous*, *asseyez-vous*, etc. If the early work is to be founded on a picture, the names of the chief objects on it may be practised beforehand. If this is done systematically and thoroughly, the result will be that when the class begins conversation, many of the difficulties will be found to have been already overcome and there will be less danger of discouragement. A teacher will learn by experience what the difficulties are that require to be attended to beforehand. It is most important that each pupil should have acquired all the sounds before conversation is begun; conversation once started, it would be irritating to have to stop the work of the class to explain to some 'duffer' what a nasal vowel is. In the writer's experience, time spent in seeking out the combinations of sounds likely to give trouble, and practising them, is amply made up for by the rapidity with which progress afterwards takes place, and by the lasting good impression made on the pupils by an encouraging start. There is nothing more likely to damp a boy's ardour to speak French than to pull him up at every second word to correct his pronunciation. Some correction of pronunciation there naturally will have to be at all stages; but it should not be so excessive as to break too frequently the thread of conversation. And the correction had much better come from the pupils themselves than from the teacher.

As soon as the sounds have been mastered, it is

sometimes found useful to teach some simple French songs. If songs are taught, it is essential that the pupils should be word-perfect in them before they are allowed to sing them: to sing mistakes is fatal. If the songs are thoroughly learnt, sound by sound and syllable by syllable, the singing of them will have a good effect on pronunciation; and a little music tends to add to the brightness of the French lesson.

It is not easy to exaggerate the difficulty of mastering the pronunciation of a foreign language; it is a thing which can only be done by hard, persistent effort. The beginner who pronounces French easily may be sure he is pronouncing it wrongly. The acquiring of a new pronunciation is the acquiring of a new set of muscular habits; these habits can be acquired only by constant practice. The essential aim of the learner is to associate certain muscular movements with certain sounds. When this has been accomplished, when all the foreign sounds have been thoroughly acquired, *a perfectly exact medium of intercourse has been established between the teacher and his class*; henceforth oral work is in no sense less exact than written work, and a mistake in speech can be singled out as definitely and as surely as a mistake in writing.

CHAPTER II

FLUENCY

THE way having been carefully prepared by phonetic training, we now approach our second purpose, which is fluency of speech. If the phonetic exercises have of necessity been rather laborious and difficult, conversation on the other hand must be *pleasant*. Conversation which is not pleasant can hardly be called conversation at all. Our aim must be not merely to get our pupils to speak the foreign language, but to *like* speaking it. It is only in so far as we can succeed in doing this that we can succeed in applying the principle of the 'direct method.' But this does not mean that the question of pronunciation has been finally disposed of and left behind us; laxity of speech must always be corrected; we shall expect facility in the use of the spoken tongue to increase; indeed it only in the fluent use of the spoken language that one important element of pronunciation can be dealt with at all—namely, intonation. There should be a few minutes phonetic drill at the beginning of each lesson for some time.

The disposal of the class for oral work is of some importance. It is desirable—where the shape of

the room renders it possible—that the pupils should be arranged in rows of five. The middle boy in each row should be the cleverest in that row; it will be his function to correct the mistakes made by the others and to see that they repeat correctly what they had previously said incorrectly. Thus, if the boy beside him says *J'ai allé*, he will turn to him and say, *Je suis allé*; [1] the blunderer repeats, *Je suis allé*, and the work goes on without further interruption or waste of time. Such a systematic method of correcting mistakes saves the energy of the teacher, gives good exercise to the brighter members of the form, and leads to healthy rivalry and a good standard of work. The teacher will need to intervene from time to time, but generally speaking *the talking is to be done by the pupils, not by the master.* That is what the pupils are there for—to exercise themselves in the use of the foreign speech. A dull boy should always be placed between two bright boys. Pupils who suffer from defective hearing should be discovered as early as possible and brought to the front part of the class.[2]

It is a good plan to give the pupils French names, in order to avoid introducing English speech-sounds into the French lesson. It goes against the grain

[1] A far better way of correcting this mistake is for the corrector to say, *Tu es allé*. This may be difficult at first .t I know from experience that it can be made the practice.

[2] Difficulty in pronouncing the nasal vowels may lead to the discovery of cases of adenoids; such cases should be referred to the school doctor, and the parents should be advised to see to the matter. Adenoids are very easily removed.

to have to say '*Apportez-moi votre cahier*, Haygarth.' The pupils' Christian names may be gallicised—François for Frank, Guillaume for William, etc.; or familiar French names may be given, such as Dubois, Lebon, etc. A name like Victor, which is spelt alike in both languages, is useful, for its constant use in the French lesson serves to call attention to the striking differences of pronunciation. This plan also is favourable to the development of that foreign atmosphere which it is the teacher's aim to create in the French class-room.

In oral work, especially in the early stages when the words at our disposal are so few, the personality of the teacher counts for much. He has had the advantage of making his pupils' acquaintance already during the period of phonetic training, and of learning something of their characteristics. Now, in his attempt to establish the foreign language as the language of the class-room, he must—at first, at any rate—learn to rely on other means of communication besides speech; his look, the tones of his voice, the gestures of which he makes use—all these will be important factors in establishing the right kind of relations with a class of young people. Nor need discipline suffer in the least. There is a certain way of combining strict discipline with good humour and geniality, and the sooner the teacher learns how to do this, the better. He must know how to control his class by a look. All children like firm discipline; they do not like harshness or ill-temper. The art of

maintaining discipline must be developed by each teacher for himself; there are many ways of doing it. To break off the 'conversation' in order to deliver in English a long and angry tirade against Smith for forgetting his book is *not* one of the ways to be recommended; better leave such matters till the lesson is over. The atmosphere of the class-room must at all times be conducive to conversation. The demeanour of the teacher should be such as to invite the conversation of the class. Human dialogue does not assume its most beautiful forms when it is accompanied by threats and frowns. And there are other ways of controlling children besides punishing them.

Every quality and accomplishment which the teacher possesses will stand him in good stead. A knowledge of music is useful. The ability to draw on the blackboard may help him over many a difficult explanation. A sense of humour, or the gift of repartee, is invaluable. But more than all else matter those fundamental qualities of firmness and frankness, justice and charity, the presence or absence of which finally make every human relationship beautiful or the reverse. And the relationship between the modern language teacher and his pupils is a very human relationship. One can see lessons given in other subjects in which there is no more real intercourse between teacher and taught than if the work were carried on by correspondence. But in the modern language class-room there must be much intercourse between teacher and taught, and that intercourse is to be

based on what is the most pleasant of all pastimes, the least selfish of all intellectual pursuits, the finest manifestation of social culture—conversation.

Some account has already been given of the way in which oral work on direct method principles is begun. In regard to details of procedure the teacher will naturally follow the plan of the particular book he has adopted for the use of his class. This is obviously necessary. The teacher's aim, however, is to replace the mother-tongue in the most complete manner by the foreign language, to arrive at free and unrestricted conversation as early as possible. He will hardly succeed in doing this without going considerably beyond the limits of most 'First Courses,' however well planned. To adhere too closely to the page of a printed book, especially in the earliest stages, may have a paralysing influence on the development of natural talk. Commands, reproofs, expressions of praise and blame, and all the 'small talk' of conversation should be introduced as early as possible and used constantly. The pupils will quickly acquire the knack of using sentences beginning with *Puis-je*, *Faut-il*, etc. Most first books dwell a considerable time on the present tense, but we must pass beyond its restricted boundaries at an early stage, if there is to be any real freedom of expression, and if the ordinary matters of class routine are to be dealt with in the foreign tongue. The perfect tense and the future can be taught almost from the beginning. When the order is given *Fermez vos livres*, the pupils can

be trained to say, first, *Nous allons fermer nos livres*, then—suiting the action to the word—*Nous fermons nos livres*; finally, *Nous les avons fermés*. The various persons of any given tense may be taught as follows: One pupil says *J'ai fermé mon livre*; the others turning to him say in chorus, *Tu as fermé ton livre*, then addressing the teacher and indicating the pupil, *Il a fermé son livre*; the pupil now will address the class and say, *Vous avez fermé vos livres*; finally, turning to the teacher and indicating the other pupils, he will say, *Ils ont fermé leurs livres*. Constant practice of this kind leads to complete familiarity with the commonest verbal forms, the pronouns, the possessive adjectives; and familiarizes the pupils also with the foreign word-order.

The verb—in the Romance languages at least—is perhaps the greatest obstacle to the attainment of fluency. It is undesirable to teach too many tenses at once, for fear of confusion. At a somewhat later stage, however, the conditional may be added to those mentioned above. The teacher may then begin with the questions *Qu'est ce que vous feriez, si je vous disais de fermer vos livres?* and *Qu'est-ce que vous ferez, si je vous dis de fermer vos livres?*—the answers to these questions will accustom the pupils to the use of the imperfect with the conditional, and the present with the future. It has been found useful to practise a tense-drill of this kind, both with the whole class and with individuals, for a few minutes at the beginning of every lesson. The other tenses need

obviously not be dealt with until we come to read narrative.

Nobody need be surprised at the introduction at this early stage of irregular verbs, such as *aller*, *faire*, *dire*, etc.; the commonest irregular verbs may gradually be introduced into quite elementary work, and in fact must be introduced, if there is to be any freedom of speech, for we cannot get on without them.

Any discussion of grammatical forms that has to take place can without difficulty be conducted in the foreign tongue; the pupils will generally be found to acquire the necessary terminology with great facility. This terminology should obviously be that of the foreign language itself; as long as languages present differences of phenomena they will require corresponding differences of terminology, and any attempt to make the same terminology apply to different languages must necessarily fail. The pupils may be given a grammar written in the foreign tongue, which can be used as a glossary for the purposes of reference: [1] when the pupil is doing written work at home he should have some means of refreshing his memory as to the past definite of *vivre*, or the preposition which follows the verb *rire*.

It has been said that the oral teacher should be

[1] It is the function of the dictionary rather than the grammar to supply such information; for the practical purposes of school-work I am inclined to suggest that there is a need (side by side with the scientific grammar) for a new kind of book, a 'grammatical glossary,' in which matters of the kind referred to could be conveniently and quickly looked up.

something of an actor; this may be true, but it does not mean that he should be a buffoon. He should not be nervously careful to preserve his dignity; but he should preserve it. That he should have a talent for acting himself is not so important as that he should know how to make use of the histrionic element in others. A lesson should be much more a performance by the class than by the teacher. (One recollects the story of a man of six foot two springing into the air and crying *Je saute*—to the imminent danger of the school furniture!) What we want to get into the proceedings of the classroom is *reality*. For this reason, when a question has to be asked about a matter of discipline, as for example, *Pourquoi êtes-vous en retard ce matin?* it should be put in a perfectly natural tone, and should be answered as simply and straightforwardly as if it had been asked in English. And this is important from the strictly linguistic point of view, for it is only thus that we are likely to arrive at right intonation and natural speech.

The characteristic French intonation should be taught from the beginning; it may be illustrated on the blackboard by means of curved lines showing the rise and fall of the voice.[1] Pains should likewise be taken to restrain the pupils from speaking French with strong stresses—from putting a strong

[1] See an interesting article on 'The Importance of Intonation in the Pronunciation of Foreign languages,' by Mr. Daniel Jones in *Modern Language Teaching* for November 1914. A good book on the subject is Klinghardt and de Fourmestraux' *Französische Intonations-übungen* (Schulze, Cöthen).

stress (e.g.), on the first syllable of [separe], or on the second syllable of [attrape].

All mistakes in oral work should be corrected; that is to say, the pupil who has made a mistake should not go on until he has repeated correctly what he had previously said incorrectly. If this is not done, the mistake will certainly recur.[1] The class should be trained to correct briskly, so that the work may go forward. A mistake is merely an unfortunate accident, and should be disposed of as expeditiously as possible; no more time should be given to the correcting of it than is necessary to do it effectively; it should not be allowed to break the continuity of the work. A keen class will pounce on mistakes with becoming promptness; they will not allow a blunderer to proceed until he gives them satisfaction. Cases will occur where one of the weaker members of the class gets into a tangle with a sentence and the process of disentanglement threatens to take so long as to be a disproportionate waste of time; it is a mistake to allow the class to be held up too long; the best plan in such circumstances is to tell the pupil to reduce the sentence to phonetic writing and to repeat it the next morning. This applies particularly to sentences where the difficulty is phonetic. A beginner may easily stumble over such a sentence as *Où est-ce que tu as vu les loups—*

[1] Mistakes must be corrected; but the golden rule is that prevention is better than cure—in other words, the work should be so planned that the temptation to error is reduced to a minimum.

owing in this instance to the rapid alternation of back and front vowels. The overcoming of such a difficulty is purely a matter of practice, and that practice had better take place at home. (One assumes, of course, that the pupil has attained to complete mastery of all the individual sounds.) This plan for improving facility of speech has been found very useful and can be more extensively applied: thus if a pupil is known to find difficulty in the pronunciation of any given sound, or combination of sounds, a phrase may be given him to practise at home and repeat every morning at the beginning of the French lesson; a boy, for instance, who found difficulty with the front rounded vowel [ø] might be told to rise every morning in class and say [bɔ̃ʒu:r mɔsjø]. A few minutes devoted to phonetic practice of this kind at the beginning of each lesson is well spent; one reaps the benefit not only in the improvement in pronunciation, but in the saving of time due to the reduction of error and increased rapidity of speech.

CHAPTER III

FLUENCY (*continued*)

As soon as a class has attained to a safe grasp of the foreign speech-basis, the transition from phonetic to orthographic writing may be made. This may be done at the end of the first term, or at the end of the first year, according to circumstances. This transition is an important event in the career of a modern language class. Much will depend on how it is carried out. It is essential that it should be done thoroughly. The pupils had better be set to find out for themselves the orthographic equivalents of the various sounds; they will remember them the better for having discovered them. The ' discoveries ' of the pupils can then be compared, corrected, or amplified; finally the teacher may write the whole system of sounds and orthographic equivalents on the blackboard, from which each pupil can copy it into his *cahier au propre*, where he will always be able to consult it in case of necessity. The table thus drawn up should show the various ways in which each sound can be orthographically written: e.g., under [ɛ] we should find that it can be represented

by *e* (*reste*), by *è* (*père*), by *ê* (*même*), by *ei* (*seize*) and by *ai* (*français*).

It might be supposed that the use of two different alphabets would lead to confusion and consequently to bad spelling. If the phonetic teaching has been lacking in thoroughness, or if the transition has been carried out in a slipshod manner, this result will certainly ensue. But where the teaching is efficient, *phonetically taught pupils invariably spell better.* The reason of this is obvious. Spelling for most persons is purely and simply a matter of visual memory. If the word 'necessary' be written with two c's and one s, it is the shape of the word that will tell us that there is something wrong. Now the spelling of the French language, though far from being *phonetic*, is at least to a considerable extent *regular*; it follows that the transition to orthographic writing, when it is carried out systematically, *is really a method of teaching spelling.* It is true it is not a method which will enable the pupil to spell any given word by its sounds; but it greatly limits the possibility of error. He may know five different ways in which a given sound may be represented; but then he knows ninety-five ways in which it could not possibly be represented. The sound [ɑ̃] can only be spelt *en*, *an*, *em*, or *am*, and the two latter are rather unusual, occurring only before b or p; *vente* could scarcely be misspelt by a phonetically taught pupil, if he knows it is connected with *vendre.* The other day a pupil, who had just made the transition, was asked to guess the spelling of the word *paletot*,

which he had heard for the first time: he guessed *paleteau*; wrong—but then how much wronger it might have been; and *paleteau* is orthographically quite a possible form. Gradually the pupil acquires a *flair* and a sense of inevitability about spelling. . . . .

Much dictation is desirable at this juncture to create familiarity with the printed forms. If time permits, the pupils may be exercised in turning phonetic writing into orthographic, or *vice versa*. Phonetic dictations should never be entirely discontinued. When a new word has to be taught, it will be a good plan to have it written on the blackboard in both orthographic and phonetic writing, the one immediately beneath the other. It is good practice for the pupils at any time to pronounce a number of words to them and ask them to say how many sounds there are in each word; from time to time a pupil may be called on to point out all the sounds of a word on the chart, or to write them on the blackboard.

Pronunciation is only one of the obstacles to fluency; there are others, the chief of which are the grammatical structure of the language and vocabulary.

Familiarity with grammatical forms must develop slowly. To 'know' a grammatical form is to be able to use it freely; it will be undesirable therefore to introduce the pupil to too many forms at once. The language must unroll itself before him gradually. It is for this reason that we begin with the present tense, and pass from that to the perfect

and the future. Familiar command of these being assured, we add the conditional. Already in his second year, however, the pupil should be able to begin to read a simple French story; he will now make the acquaintance of the past definite and imperfect, and should be taught from the beginning to distinguish carefully between these two tenses. The advantage of learning the tenses in this gradual manner is that he will never be tempted to confuse them: he will, e.g., never make the mistake of using the past definite in conversation. In the same way he will acquire the use of the pluperfect and past anterior, and learn by practice to distinguish between these also. In any ordinary story he will meet sooner or later all the ordinary constructions of the foreign language; more attention should be paid to constructions in proportion as they are useful, or of frequent occurrence. Expressions such as *après avoir fait cela*, *ayant fait cela*, *cela fait*, *avant de faire cela*, etc., will be quickly picked up and made use of; on the other hand it would be a mistake to pay too much attention to the subjunctive mood at this early stage; where it occurs it should be n and the teacher may accustom the class to h g it after such expressions as *il faut* and some of the commoner conjunctions; gradually the brighter pupils will take to using it, and presently, when a suitable opportunity occurs, it may be dealt with more exhaustively. The same applies to such a matter as the agreement of the past participle; the pupils will gradually begin to notice it in the teacher's speech—e.g. *la*

faute que vous avez faite—presently the construction may be explained and the pupils will begin to adopt it in their conversation. Such simple matters as the agreement of the adjective, the plural forms of nouns, the comparison of adjectives, are so easily dealt with that they do not call for any special remark.

It is important that unidiomatic constructions should be ruled out, even in the earliest stages, otherwise they will become current: thus the answer to the question, *Combien de murs la salle a-t-elle?* should not be *La salle a quatre murs*, but *Elle en a quatre*; the answer to the question, *Qui est-ce qui parle bien français?* should not be *Je parle bien français*, but *C'est moi qui parle bien français*, etc. On the other hand, the most idiomatic expressions, if the class is accustomed to them, will pass into common use.

The frequent learning by heart of pieces of idiomatic prose is a great help. For this purpose pieces of dialogue are particularly useful.

Lack of vocabulary may hold a pupil up just as much as ignorance of grammatical construction. A systematic effort should be made to widen vocabulary. The words and expressions met with in the text read should be associated (1) with their synonyms and (2) with their opposites: thus with the word *heureusement* should be associated its synonym *par bonheur* and its opposite *malheureusement* (or *par malheur*). Again, the simple laws of word-formation should be taught—how adverbs are formed from adjectives, nouns from verbs,

verbs from nouns, verbs from adjectives, etc. Words of the same family should be associated with each other—e.g. *obliger*, *obligeant*, *obligeamment*, *l'obligeance*, *obligatoire*, *une obligation*. The signification of prefixes and suffixes should be made clear—e.g. of *dé* in *défaire*, *ot* in *Pierrot*. A proper attention to these matters is not only helpful in extending vocabulary, it is also a considerable aid to the development of linguistic sense in the foreign language. Again, much can be done to extend the learner's knowledge of the names of the common objects of everyday life by means of books of Picture Vocabularies, the various pictures of which represent a sitting-room, a bedroom, a street, a workshop, etc., with the different objects they contain.

Many things may be done to make the attainment of fluency possible; fluency itself can only come by assiduous practice. True fluency of speech—which means something more than mere rapidity of utterance—can only occur in natural talk; and natural talk only occurs when we are using language as a means to express our thoughts or our feelings. Then language has its natural accompaniment of emotion, and this is expressed by the inflexions of the voice, in intonation, stress, etc. For this reason it is a good plan, in addition to the inevitable questions and answers on the subject matter of the book read, to engage the pupils frequently in informal conversation on subjects with which they are familiar and in which they are interested. The common happenings

of their daily lives—games, home-work, etc., are soon exhausted. A good substitute is the 'disputation.' A disputation is an argument between the teacher and the class—or a member or certain members of the class—on some such question as *Whether the world is round*, *Whether the invention of printing was a calamity*, or *Whether home-work should be abolished!* A discussion of *Whether the master acted justly in punishing Snooks for forgetting his book*, conducted in Socratic wise, may be productive of a good deal of intellectual exhilaration. The disputation, however, is only for teachers who have an instinct for logic-chopping and are able to create a similar instinct in their pupils—and, having created it, to control it! With such it leads to oral work of the very best kind.

There is no reason whatever—once a sufficient amount of progress has been made—why the teacher should not take to teaching geometry, or geography, or still better, history, through the medium of the foreign language. If he feels any inclination to do so, the necessity of teaching a technical vocabulary need not deter him; any technical vocabulary is very easily acquired, and is seldom otherwise quite useless; and even when a vocabulary is highly technical, the framework that binds it together must always be living, idiomatic French. . . . There is a peculiar advantage in dealing in the foreign language with a subject which requires close thought—which must, however, be well within the pupil's grasp. The heightened intellectual activity appears to react favourably

on the linguistic faculties. The rapid give and take of question and answer, objection and refutation, tend to give the pupil readiness and confidence, as well as a pleasurable sense of command over the foreign language as a means of expressing his thought. Such experiments as these, however, must be a matter for the individual teacher, who should always have freedom to develop those methods by which he thinks he is most likely to achieve his purpose. But that purpose is the same for all: it is to bring the pupils to speak the foreign language with freedom, with directness, and with conviction.

CHAPTER IV

EXERCISES

THE old grammar and dictionary method of learning languages followed a routine which was a familiar and settled tradition. The exercises through which the learner was put are well known to everybody: he prepared portions of the foreign text *à coups de dictionnaire*, he combined the words of a given vocabulary into sentences in accordance with given grammatical rules. This apparently simple procedure is, as we have seen, quite insufficient for the complicated and difficult enterprise of learning a living language: apart from the fact that it leaves important aspects of the language wholly untouched upon, it is equally to be condemned from the point of view of linguistics and psychology. The grammar and translation exercises through which the pupil was put had, however, a certain attractive simplicity and apparent directness with recommended them, and still recommend them, to many teachers. The routine followed rendered it easy to estimate the effort made by the pupil, to judge whether he was doing 'conscientious work': either he had learnt his verbs or he had not learnt them, either he could translate

his text or he could not. To be able to put searching questions to the pupil in his own familiar speech gave an added sense of control, which was further increased by the fact that the teaching was ostensibly based on a system of ratiocination, a 'rule' or a 'reason' being given for everything, and the learner then held to account for putting these into practice. It is undoubtedly of importance that children should be taught to grapple with their difficulties boldly and not to shirk them, and it would be absurd to deny that a considerable share of every schoolmaster's energies has to be directed to dealing with the idler and the malingerer. It is because oral methods of teaching appear to make so little provision for dealing with difficulties of this kind that many teachers distrust them. It is quite natural to distrust methods of teaching which lead to lax discipline and lax thinking; but oral methods are not calculated to lead to laxity of any kind—*unless the teacher be incompetent.* With a teacher who has a real command of the foreign language and an intelligent grasp of the principles of method, the oral method imposes a much more rigorous discipline on the pupils, and exacts from them a considerably greater effort and much closer attention. The discipline of the oral method is, moreover, *natural* discipline, since it is founded on *interest;* much of the severity of the old translation method arose out of the fact that the teaching was often a sham; the pupils were generally quick enough to see that it was a sham, and had consequently very little respect either for

the subject or the person who taught it. When a living language is efficiently taught as a living language, it invariably commands the respect of a class, for the difficulties with which they are confronted are such as can only be overcome by concentrating on the task all their energies.

The mother-tongue having been banished from the modern language classroom, the conventional exercises of grammar and construe must be replaced by others, which need not, however, be one whit less rigorous or less exacting, though they may be both more natural and more useful. The kind of exercises of which one makes use to replace translation may be to some extent indicated by the following extract from a little French fairy-tale edited by the writer:

YVON FAIT LA CONNAISSANCE D'UN GÉANT

Le matin, à son réveil, Yvon essaya de reconnaître le pays où le hasard l'avait jeté. Il aperçut dans le lointain une maison grande comme une cathédrale, avec des fenêtres qui avaient cinquante pieds de haut. Il marcha tout un jour avant d'y arriver, et enfin se trouva en face d'une porte immense, avec un marteau si lourd que la main d'un homme ne pouvait le soulever.

Yvon prit une grosse pierre, et se mit à frapper.

— Entre, dit une voix qui retentit comme le mugissement d'un bœuf; au même instant la porte s'ouvrit, et le petit Breton se trouva face à face avec un géant qui n'avait pas moins de quarante pieds.

— Comment t'appelles-tu, et que viens-tu faire ici ? dit le géant, en prenant notre aventurier au collet, et en l'élevant de terre pour le voir plus à son aise.

Je m'appelle *Sans-Peur*, et je cherche fortune, répondit Yvon, en regardant le monstre d'un air de défi.

— Eh bien, brave Sans-Peur, ta fortune est faite, dit le géant d'un ton de moquerie ; j'ai besoin d'un valet, je te prends à mon service. Tu vas entrer de suite en fonction. Voici l'heure où je mène paître mon troupeau ; tu nettoieras l'étable. Je ne te donne pas autre chose à faire, ajouta-t-il en riant du bout des lèvres, tu vois que je suis un bon maître. Fais ta besogne, et surtout ne rôde pas dans la maison, il y va de ta vie.

— Certes, j'ai un bon maître, l'ouvrage n'est pas rude, pensa Yvon, quand le géant fut parti. J'ai, Dieu merci, le temps de balayer l'étable. Que faire en attendant, pour me désennuyer ? Si je visitais la maison ? Puisqu'on me défend d'y regarder, c'est qu'il y a quelque chose à voir.

EXERCICES

(*a*) 1. Qu'est-ce qu' Yvon fit le matin, à son réveil ? 2. Qu'est-ce qu'il aperçut dans le lointain ? 3. Pourquoi marcha-t-il vers cette maison ? 4. Pourquoi ne se servit-il pas du marteau pour frapper à la porte ? 5. Avec quoi frappa-t-il ? 6. Qui est-ce qui ouvrit la porte ? 7. Est-ce qu' Yvon eut peur de lui ? 8. Qu'est-ce qu'il dit à Yvon ? 9. Qu'est-ce qu'il lui défendit de faire ? 10. Pourquoi Yvon voulait-il visiter la maison ?

(*b*) *Mettez l'imparfait ou le passé défini :* Le matin Yvon (se mettre) à marcher vers une très grande maison qu'il (voir) dans le lointain. Le soir il (arriver) devant la porte ; et comme

le marteau (être) si lourd qu'il ne (pouvoir) le soulever, il (frapper) avec une grosse pierre. Un géant (ouvrir) la porte et lui (demander) ce qu'il (vouloir). Yvon (répondre) qu'il (s'appeler) Sans-Peur et qu'il (chercher) fortune. Le géant lui (dire) que sa fortune (être) faite, car il (avoir) besoin d'un valet et le prendrait à son service. Ce jour-là Yvon (entrer) au service du géant.

(*c*) *Mettez au présent :* Le matin, à son réveil . . . ne pouvait le soulever.

(*d*) *Yvon raconte comment il fit la connaissance du géant :* se réveiller, apercevoir, se mettre en route, arriver, frapper, ouvrir, demander, répondre.

(*e*) *Le contraire de :* permettre, le nain, répondre, loin, arriver, entrer, défendre, le géant, demander, près, partir, sortir.[1]

The first thing to be done with a piece of text is to explain its meaning. This must be done thoroughly. It is not easy to give definite instructions as to how difficulties should be explained in the foreign tongue: *défendre* is obviously to be described as the opposite of *permettre*, and *dans le lointain* as meaning *très loin de lui*, but the teacher must rely on his own ingenuity to explain *rire du bout des lèvres*. . . . In such cases the teacher should not hesitate to translate into English, if necessary. But the necessity should be a real one, and should not arise through the teacher's lack of preparation. In the writer's experience there are very few words or phrases which can be better explained in English than in the foreign tongue. (Obvious exceptions are names of flowers, trees, and animals: these should be translated at once, unless they can be pointed out.) In the above case, if we say that *rire du bout des lèvres* signifies *rire peu et sans joie*, we shall probably be bringing the pupil

[1] *Yvon et Finette.* (J. M. Dent & Sons.)

as close to the meaning of the phrase as we could hope to do by any translation.

The first and most obvious exercise on the text is a series of questions on the subject-matter. These questions should be carefully put, so as to test the pupil's comprehension of what he has read and his command of the various constructions he has met. Question No. 1 in the above extract is not a very good question, since the pupil to whom it is put can answer it by simply reading off the first sentence of the text: *Le matin, à son réveil, Yvon essaya de reconnaître le pays où le hasard l'avait jeté.* We must be careful not to make it possible for the pupil to answer questions in a parrot-like manner without understanding the words he repeats. There is enough danger of this to warrant our being on our guard against it; the danger, however, cannot be very great, for any intelligent teacher could tell from a pupil's intonation whether he had a real grasp of what he was saying. A well-taught class carry on their oral work with alertness and with the light of intelligence in their eyes, and any failure to follow the work intelligently soon reveals itself to the practised teacher in a dozen ways. Questions beginning with *pourquoi* are always good. The pupils should be trained to substitute pronouns for nouns in their answers: thus the answer to No. 4 should begin, *Il ne s'en servit pas*, . . . not *Yvon ne se servit pas du marteau*. . . . It may be desirable at times to insist on questions being answered with complete sentences, but it would be unwise to make it an unvarying rule, for

this might easily lead to a stiff and unnatural manner of speaking. It has been suggested that in putting a series of questions on a piece of narrative it is a more natural procedure to begin at the end and work backwards: in that case, we should in the above instance begin by asking *Pourquoi Yvon voulait-il visiter la maison?* and unravel the story step by step until we arrived finally at the cause of Yvon's setting out on his journey. . . .

The exercise marked (*b*) is designed for the stage where pupils have just begun to read narrative, and run an obvious risk of confusing the past definite and the imperfect. A difficulty of this kind should be seen a long way ahead and definite steps taken to deal with it. By means of plentiful illustrations and exercises of the kind given it can be disposed of once for all at the beginning. In the same way the difference between the pluperfect and past anterior can be taught.

(*c*) represents a type of exercise of which there are many forms: what has been read in the first person may be related in the third, the singular may be substituted for the plural, or the past for the present. Again, direct speech may be substituted for indirect, or *vice versa*; thus the whole dialogue between Yvon and the giant might be related in indirect speech (e.g. *Le géant demanda à Yvon comment il s'appelait et ce qu'il venait faire là*, etc.). This is a very useful form of exercise; the changes that have to be made, not only in regard to the tenses, but also in the pronouns and other words, constitute good practice in facile command

of the foreign idiom—amongst other things, the replacing of the future by the conditional makes clear to the learner why this latter tense is sometimes called *le futur dans le passé.*

In exercise (*d*) the pupil is asked to relate the episode in his own words, the main verbs being supplied to indicate the outlines of the narrative. Here the learner has plenty of scope for showing a skilful use of connectives, such as *après cela, dès que*, etc., and even for developing an elementary sense of style. This exercise is actually a tentative effort in the direction of Free Composition, a subject so important that a separate chapter will have to be devoted to it.

It is, generally speaking, undesirable to set portions of the foreign text to be prepared at home, at least in the earliest stages. As soon as a certain degree of familiarity with the language has been established there is no reason why a few paragraphs of text should not occasionally be set to be prepared with the aid of the *petit Larousse.* The use of the ordinary French-English dictionary should be forbidden. When such an exercise is given, the pupils should be examined on it very carefully, so as to ensure that it has been done conscientiously. General questions can be put on the subject-matter, more minute questions to test comprehension of the constructions and the meanings of particular words. The best way of dealing with the malingerer, who pleads that he was unable to find out the meaning of a given word, is to ask for the dictionary definition to be given ;

if this be forthcoming, he may be challenged to say what there was in it that he could not understand; the dictionary may have used another word which was unknown to him—did he look that up also? etc. Such searching methods leave no loophole of escape for the slipshod worker. Thoroughness on the part of the master generally has a wholesome effect on the class. A teacher who is known not to spare himself often compels his class to diligence by his very example. If he is interested in his work, he will know the exact limits of his pupils' vocabulary; he will thus be able to judge very accurately the degree of difficulty presented to them by each new word or expression; and he can make himself still more familiar with their difficulties by preparing the work at home himself—looking up the hard words in the Larousse, even though he knows them already. The essential thing is to create in a form a *tradition* of thoroughness which, once created, to a large extent takes care of itself. But while thoroughness in the preparation of the foreign text is to be inculcated, the pupils should not be encouraged to pay undue attention to out-of-the-way words, which they are never likely to meet again. They will show a tendency at the beginning to treat all foreign words as of equal value. They must acquire some sense of proportion: they should learn what words and expressions are likely to be useful to them. In the ensuing chapter of the little fairy-tale quoted above there occurs the word *crémaillère* (pot-hanger). This word

needs to be understood for the sake of the story, but the teacher need not worry much if the pupils immediately forget it, for they may never need it again. It is not, generally speaking, desirable that the teacher should be found ignorant of anything in the foreign text; but where such ignorance occurs naturally—e.g. of some unusual or technical expression it should be frankly confessed, for such confession has then an educative effect on the pupils. It is most undesirable that they should think the teacher knows every word in the foreign language, since we are none of us familiar with every word in our own language. Moreover, it makes for frankness; and if the relations between a schoolmaster and his pupils are not frank, it hardly matters much what else they are.

CHAPTER V

THE EARLY TEACHING OF GERMAN

THE main principles of language teaching are, of course, equally applicable to the teaching of all languages. Whatever the language, our first aims must always be purity of pronunciation, fluency of speech, and the mastery of its orthographic system, leaving ourselves free thereafter to concentrate our attention on the study of its structure and development, and, above all, of its literature; though these stages, it need hardly be pointed out, may very considerably overlap. All that has been said, up to the present, therefore, applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the teaching of German, or of any other living language; it will be well, however, to make a few remarks on the special problems which German presents.

In most English schools German is the second living language to be begun, French being the first. Beginning the language at a more mature age, the pupils may be expected to make more rapid progress in it, especially if the intensive system is applied. Whatever previous phonetic training they may have received will be helpful to them; this applies particularly to the vowel sounds. The

work they have done at French, if it has been well done, will simplify their task, which they are likely to approach with clearness of aim and directness of purpose; on the other hand, if the French teaching has been unsatisfactory, it will make the beginning of the new language doubly difficult, for they will in that case not only have to master all the fresh difficulties, but also to unlearn many bad habits. The fact that German is a stressed language like English, and the considerable similarity of vocabulary—especially in regard to common words like *Vater*, *Mutter*, *Bruder*, *Haus*, *Garten*—will be sure to make the pupils take to it kindly, if it is skilfully taught. There is such an abundance of beautiful songs in German that it would be almost a pity not to make use of them for the purposes of improving pronunciation.

Although German is a language of strong stresses like English, it is most important to bear in mind that whereas in English we put a strong accent on one syllable of a word and often shorten the remaining syllables very considerably, in German unstressed syllables must be distinctly pronounced: thus the name Altona (the name of a town near Hamburg) bears a strong accent on the first syllable, but the second and third syllables require at the same time to be distinctly enunciated; especially the learner must be careful not to pronounce the final *a* as [ə]. In a word like *Familie* [fa'mi:ljə], where the stress is on the second syllable, the vowel of which is at the same time long, there is a tendency on the part of the English

learner—due to the influence of his own native speech-habits—to slur over the first syllable; this, however, must be carefully guarded against and a distinct [a] pronounced.

Since German spelling is so much more phonetic than French, it is sometimes suggested that the use of phonetic writing in the early stages is unnecessary. Quite as good a pronunciation, it is said, can be obtained without it. Even if this assertion were true—in the writer's experience it is nothing of the sort—we should still have to bear in mind that a systematic training in the speech-sounds has a value of its own and a place of its own in linguistic training. We have really no more right to neglect the phonetic features of the language than we have to neglect its syntax; and to show a class occasionally how this or that word would be represented in phonetic writing is of very doubtful value—they must carry it to the point of being able to write phonetic dictation. The time spent in acquiring this degree of skill will certainly not have been wasted, and the knowledge acquired will be of great value to them later on if they should ever proceed to the study of philology.

To the pupil who has already mastered the phonetics of French, the German vowels will present very little difficulty; he will practically find that he knows them already. The distinction between long and short vowels will, however, require considerable attention and a good deal of practice: e.g. *Staat* and *Stadt* must not be confused. English learners as a rule do not make long German

vowels long enough; when finally they are brought to do so – e.g. in a word like *Bruder*—they usually make the further mistake of slurring over the following syllable. They must learn to balance the word properly, giving due value to the long syllables without neglecting the others; to this they can only attain by constant practice. This problem is affected also by considerations of stress and intonation. (See remark on intonation in Chapter II.) Of the German diphthongs, [au] demands special attention. The wide difference of pronunciation between *Haus* and *house*, *Maus* and *mouse*, should be insisted upon; it can best be brought out by having the component vowels of the diphthong pronounced separately in succession, first slowly, then with increasing rapidity.

The *Knacklaut*, or 'glottal stop,' is a very characteristic feature of German; the pupils will be slow to realize the extreme importance of it, but it will have to be impressed on them, if they are ever to learn to speak German intelligibly.

The learner's chief difficulties will be with the consonants. These are pronounced with a certain force; the German 'stops' especially are much more explosive than the corresponding sounds in either French or English. In such respects English holds a mid-way position between French and German. There are not many of the consonantal sounds which in themselves are really very difficult of acquisition; what will baffle the learner is rather certain unwonted initial combinations of them (e.g. [ts] [pf] [kn], etc.).

Great care must be taken to insist on the final voiceless *s* (e.g. [ʔɛs]).

Such obstacles as these will afford plenty of wholesome exercise for that useful bundle of muscles, the tongue. The learner will have to be brought to see that he cannot hope to attain to the mastery of German speech without the expenditure of a good deal of muscular energy.

In the case of German even more than in the case of French, the transition from phonetic to orthographic writing, if it is carefully and thoroughly carried out, can be made to subserve the purpose of teaching spelling. German orthography is comparatively regular. The pupils will be quick to note such points as that a following *h* indicates a long vowel, that the voiced [z] between vowels is represented by one *s*; when they proceed to learn German handwriting, they will observe that while ß shows a long preceding vowel and ff a short one, yet we write der Fuß, der Fluß, since ff cannot occur at the end of a word; that the genitives, however, are written des Fußes, des Flusses. The vowel change in *Buch*, *Bücher*—a change from a back to a front vowel—produces a corresponding change in the following consonant, [χ] becoming [ç]; this, and the pretty obvious cause of it, should interest the class greatly. The cause of the vowel-mutation itself may well be explained at the same time—*not* by saying that it was caused by the presence of an [i] in the succeeding syllable, which is no explanation at all, but by showing *why* this happened, a simple and yet

significant matter which their knowledge of phonetics will quite enable them to appreciate. Such explanations are by no means out of place, for they stimulate curiosity about linguistic phenomena and inculcate the early conviction that any knowledge that is worth possessing at all is just common sense.

Our second aim, as in the teaching of French, will be the attainment of fluency, and the means by which we shall seek to realize it will not be different. All that has been said in the previous chapters applies equally to the teaching of German, with such slight alterations as are necessitated by the differences of the languages.

Since German is a more elaborately inflected language, it might appear necessary to fall back on rules and explanations in order to teach it; the teacher who is tempted to do so should reflect that, as has already been made sufficiently clear, command of grammatical forms can be achieved in one way only, and that is by using them. Forms like *der gute Mann*, *des guten Mannes*, are not to be mastered by learning by heart elaborate declensions,[1] but by speaking the German language. And the same is true of every feature of the language—to attain to practical command of it we must talk it, and not talk *about* it.

[1] As for the attempt made by some of the old-fashioned grammars to *explain* such forms, it is a sheer waste of time; the only thing worth saying about them is that they are for the most part cumbersome and unnecessary. In German *die Mäuse*, for example, plurality is expressed in three different ways, which is clearly a waste of energy; in English *the mice* it is expressed in one way only. (See Jespersen's *Progress in Language*, Chapter II.)

The tense-drill described on p. 97 is even more useful in the case of German than in the case of French; since the pupils are rather older, it will be desirable to bring them as early as possible to at least such command of the language as may make possible something in the nature of interesting conversation; and this cannot be done without some mastery of the verb. The passive voice should be taught side by side with the active: thus the pupil who has said, *Ich habe mein Buch aufgemacht*, will add, *Mein Buch ist von mir aufgemacht worden*, etc. In this way familiarity with all the tenses of both voices may be rapidly acquired, while at the same time the use of the personal pronouns and possessive adjectives is learnt, as well as the forms of the separable verb. The modal verbs are very important, and should early be pressed into the service of the class; there will be plenty of opportunity for using them in connection with class routine; a pupil should not be long in the German class before he knows the difference between *soll ich?* and *darf ich?* and it should not be difficult to bring him quickly to use (or understand) such expressions as *Ich wollte ich wäre alt genug um unter die Soldaten zu gehen*, *Du hättest es mir sagen können*, *Ich möchte gern ins Ausland gehen*, etc.

From the very beginning the pupils should be trained to the right use of *stress* in oral work. Thus when the teacher asks, *Wo hast du deine Aufgabe gemacht?* the pupil in answering, *Ich habe sie zu Hause gemacht*, should lay a perceptible stress on

Hause. Again, in answering the question, *Was hast du zu Hause gemacht?* the answer, *Meine Aufgabe habe ich zu Hause gemacht*, should show a stress on *Aufgabe*. A little back-and-forward conversation may be practised to this end in the early stages; the pupils will soon learn to appreciate the right use of emphasis, and once they have grasped the principle, they will show energy enough in applying it.[1] Proper attention to stress will prevent them, amongst other things, from ever confusing a separable with an inseparable verb. The pupil who is trained to *speak* the foreign language with due regard to stress and intonation will also, moreover, *read it aloud* with proper expression, so that the teacher will be under no necessity of asking him whether he has understood what he has read.

An endless variety of exercises can be devised to take the place of translation. All those mentioned in the chapters dealing with French are applicable. In addition, it is very useful in the case of German to give sentences with blanks to be filled in: these blanks may require the endings of nouns, adjectives, or articles, as, *Ich habe ein-gross-Berg gesehen*; or the insertion of a suitable preposition, as *Man schreibt—einer Feder*; or the

[1] It should be noted that in German the auxiliaries are never so weak in stress as they often are in English; there are, e.g., no German forms corresponding to English *I'm*, *I've*, *he'll*, *he's*, etc. It is not the verbal form which is reduced in German, but—if anything—the pronoun: *es ist* at times *may* be [sist], but never (ɛs-st], a form which English people tend to use. English showed a similar characteristic at an earlier period of its history: cp. forms such as *'tis*, *'twas*, *'twill*, etc., which have now died out.

pupil may be asked to choose between certain pairs of words which may be confused, such as *als* and *wenn*, *aber* and *sondern*, *doch* and *ja*, *erst* and *nur*, etc. Pairs of sentences may be given to be bound together by means of relative pronouns: *der Knabe ist in der Klasse, er arbeitet = der Knabe, der in der Klasse ist, arbeitet.*[1] And the teacher's own ingenuity will suggest many more of the same kind.

Great attention should be paid to word-formation in German: it is not only highly interesting, as throwing much light on the structure and growth of the language, but also very helpful in the building up of *Sprachgefühl.*

[1] It is not suggested that these exercises may not be used in teaching other languages. They seem to me particularly suited to German.

CHAPTER VI

FREE COMPOSITION

To set our pupils to translate English into French and German as a means of teaching them those languages is to put in their way those very difficulties from which it should be our aim to deliver them. It is to increase to a maximum the temptation to error. If there is anything at all certain about modern language teaching it is this, that most of the mistakes made by the learner are due to the interference of his mother-tongue. The vast bulk of the mistakes made by candidates in public examinations are just shameless anglicisms, as the writer can testify from experience. The whole problem of expressing ourselves correctly in a foreign language amounts in the last resort to a forgetting for the time being of our own language, with all its haunting associations, and an effort to direct our thoughts into another idiom. We try to recapture the associations of the foreign speech, very much as we might seek to think ourselves back into some once familiar scene. So subtle is the linguistic sense that guides us, that even the most trivial circumstance in our environment can inter-

fere with it; we seldom speak our own language so well in a foreign country, for example—unless some singular combination of circumstances reproduce what is practically the home environment. I have heard an English lady—a very good modern language scholar—declare that, when living in France, she never seemed to speak French so well on those days when she had received a long letter from home! And if those who 'know' a foreign language are to this extent at the mercy of every chance accident, how great must be the effect produced on the mere learner by putting before him the very idiom from the insidious influence of which he should at the moment be trying to escape! It is obvious that it is not in composition through the medium of English that we should exercise him, but in direct composition, or, as it has come to be called, free composition.

The same objection has been raised against free composition which has been advanced against 'direct' work generally—that it is not a sufficiently rigorous discipline, since it allows the pupil to avoid the difficulties of the language. It is urged that while a pupil who is given a piece of English to translate into French or German has no choice but to face honestly the constructions involved, the writer of original composition can avoid a difficult construction by substituting an easier one, or even in the last resort by omitting the intended remark altogether! The obvious answer to this objection is that the pupil has the same freedom to choose his constructions in writing English; yet it does

not occur to us to deny the value of English composition. This freedom, in fact, so far from being undesirable, is even a necessary condition of writing the language well and naturally. All differences of this kind are generally found on examination to have their root in other differences more deep-seated still, and the objections to free composition will usually be found to come from persons who habitually exaggerate the logical element in language. Accustomed to teach language by a ratiocinative process, and to look on the learning of a foreign tongue as consisting essentially in the mastering of a certain number of more or less difficult constructions, they naturally come to think exclusively of those aspects of language which can be reduced to 'rules,' to the neglect of much else. But to write real French merely by the aid of rules would be impossible—even if we applied the rules! To write 'real French' is, for the learner, to reproduce an echo of all that he has ever read or heard; he will even find himself reproducing many a trick of speech without rightly knowing how he came by it. Those aspects of language which we cover vaguely by such terms as idiom and style, are far from being the least important aspects of it.

It is good for the pupil to be able to arrange his ideas in his own way, and to be able to choose his own words or phrases to express them. Only so can he ever feel his way to a real sense of style, or to a natural and flexible use of the foreign language. To this end he needs freedom. . . .

But if he makes use of this freedom to avoid the difficulties of the foreign language, then his composition will plainly bear the marks of it; it will be stiff and scant, showing no flexibility or variety of construction, composed of short scrappy sentences joined together by the simplest connectives, with never a well-balanced period. The pupil who does his work in this spirit is quite evidently a 'slacker,' with no ambition to shine; his lack of diligence is the real trouble, and that is a problem in itself; to assume that a certain way of teaching him composition is the cause of it would scarcely be logical. We have very little right to suppose that he would do better if he were taught otherwise; he might, indeed, *face* the difficulties, and he *might* solve them—in a way of his own. . . . Finally, it should be remarked that the learner who refrains from using a construction about which he is doubtful is following a perfectly sound instinct; and from the point of view of his progress in the language, it is much better that he should not use it at all, than that he should use it wrongly.

If a pupil has any desire at all to learn to express himself in a foreign language, the impossibility of doing so to any purpose without mastering all its ordinary constructions can scarcely fail to be impressed on him by experience.

Examiners have raised their voices against free composition on somewhat similar grounds.[1] The

[1] Most examiners seem never to have taught free composition, and usually set the most ludicrously unsuitable subjects!

difficulty of marking it has been pointed out. Obviously it is not likely to fit readily into the traditional systems of marking followed by most examining bodies. But if our only aim were to discover those who were able to express themselves in the foreign language, a better means of doing so could scarcely be imagined; there is probably no other test whatever capable of revealing so fully a candidate's knowledge, or of allowing an examiner to see so deeply into its extent and limitations. But this is not what the examining bodies want, for they yearly grant 'passes' to hundreds of candidates who possess no real knowledge of the foreign language whatever. The influence of examinations on modern language teaching in this country is almost wholly bad. There is only one safe course for the teacher to take with regard to them, and that is *to ignore them completely*. Let him teach his pupils the language; when it comes to examinations, their sheer knowledge of it will carry them through—and more than carry them through.

The whole difficulty with free composition, first and last, is that it is badly taught. It cannot be well taught without taking infinite pains. Skill must come gradually. The pupil must walk before he can run—and creep before he can walk. The teacher must make the most careful plans for leading from one stage of progress to another. The one golden rule is: *Never take the pupil out of his depth*. If we set him to write on a subject about which he has never read or spoken in the foreign

language, he will obviously be driven to thinking in English.

Free composition may be either oral or written. *In the early stages especially it should always be both*; what has been done orally in class should be written as home-work. In no circumstances whatever should free composition be set to junior pupils without having the subject thoroughly discussed in class beforehand. If possible, it should be gradually led up to. It should invariably be something well within the pupils' grasp. After the subject has been treated in class, a general scheme may be drawn up for the composition, strict adherence to which need not, however, be insisted upon. Such a plan is sometimes a useful help to the more backward pupils. The verbs given in Exercise (*d*) in the extract in Chapter IV, Part II, serve this purpose. The exercise in question is well within the pupils' grasp, for by the time they come to it they are very familiar with all the words and expressions to be used; as a result, they should do it very well, some even without mistakes, whereas if they were set to write a composition on the Life of a Soldier without any previous preparation they would probably make many mistakes. It is only by leading up to it by such elementary exercises in the junior Forms that we can hope to get good free composition done in the advanced stages. If the work is carefully graded according to the pupil's progress, he may be taught, firstly, to write simple descriptive composition: e.g., a description of the house in which he lives; secondly, simple

narrative—he may relate a fable of La Fontaine in his own words (and he must beware of La Fontaine's words, which may belong either to the seventeenth century or to the language of poetry); finally, he may advance to that more difficult kind of writing of which an essay on 'Conscription' may stand for an example. Bu at all stages it will obviously be desirable that the subjects chosen should as far as possible arise naturally out of the work of the class.

CHAPTER VII

TRANSLATION

'Blessed art thou if thou knowest what thou doest; but if thou knowest not, then art thou accursed and a breaker of the law.'—*Apocryphal Version of one of the Gospels.*

TRANSLATION may be used with at least two distinct purposes: it may be used, on the one hand, as a means of teaching the foreign language, or, on the other, simply as an intellectual exercise. The arguments against using it as a means of teaching the language have already been set forth. On the other hand, considered as an intellectual exercise, it is in reality a comparison of the two languages in question and presupposes a competent knowledge of both. It follows that the part translation is to play in school work must be at least a very slight one. This is what Viëtor meant when he wrote, *Das Übersetzen in eine fremde Sprache ist eine Kunst, welche die Schule nichts angeht.*

When this principle has once been grasped by the teacher, it only remains for him to put it intelligently into practice. It is much more important that it should be practised in the spirit than in the letter. Like all doctrine, the more fully the

reasons of it are understood, the more likely it is to be rightly observed. To observe it rightly is not the same as to observe it rigidly. If we make an unvarying rule of never using an English word in the language lesson, the like fate may befall us that befell the German schoolmaster who described an apple so well that his pupil thought it was a turnip! . . . The exceptional use of translation may be resorted to for two purposes: the teacher may translate as a means of interpreting the foreign text, or he may call upon the pupil to translate as a test of comprehension. Such translation may have reference to a word, a sentence, or even a whole paragraph. The extent to which the teacher may, or should, resort to either it is impossible to state precisely, for it will obviously depend on many circumstances. There is only one invariable rule: the pupil *must* understand. It is finally a matter which must be settled by the individual teacher for himself. Many teachers who believe in the principle of direct teaching make a pretty free use of translation, others will only make use of an English word once in ten lessons. More can be learnt by seeing a few such lessons given than from all the books that have been written on the subject.

Translation from the foreign language is obviously much less harmful than translation into it. Yet it is a sound rule for the teacher to follow that he should never translate an expression if it is possible to explain it by other means. The practice of reaching the meaning of new words and expres-

sions through the medium of the foreign language is of great value, for it has a most favourable influence on the development of linguistic sense. It must be established as a settled habit in a class —and this cannot be done by departing from it at every moment. Some teachers make a half-hearted attempt to explain in the foreign tongue and then finally translate; this is quite useless, for if the pupil knows the difficulty is to be solved for him, he will make very little effort to solve it himself; he will merely become passive and wait for the translation which he knows will be given him. The teacher should decide beforehand which expressions he is going to explain in the foreign language, and which need translation; he will thus approach the difficulties with confidence, and this confidence will communicate itself to the class; their confidence in their teacher will create an added confidence in themselves. Nor is it true that lengthy explanations in the foreign language are always a waste of energy; it should be borne in mind that the foreign tongue is being used all the time, and the dialogue by which the meaning of a new word is made clear is a valuable exercise in itself.

In some schools, owing to the exigencies of examinations and other causes, it is considered necessary to make translation from the foreign language a definite part of the curriculum. Where this practice is followed, it will be found advisable to postpone it as long as possible. The longer it is put off, the better the translation will be. Pupils

who are taught by the old dictionary and grammar method generally translate in an unintelligent word for word fashion; those who have been accustomed to speak the foreign language translate not words but sentences, and, possessing a more familiar knowledge of the meaning of the foreign expression, they are more likely to find an adequate rendering for it in their own language. The exactness and certainty which are supposed to ensue from an early use of translation are quite illusory. Our aim at this stage is to teach the foreign language, and this can only be done by using it, not by contemplating it.

As for translation *into* the foreign language, it should never on any account be practised in junior Forms. Whether it is to be practised at all will depend on circumstances, the chief circumstance being the degree of command of the language to which the pupils have attained. To the suggestion sometimes made that there should always be some translation at the top of the school, one can only reply: It depends on the school! It is not a question of top or bottom, but of the pupils' progress. If through careful training in oral work and free composition they have attained to an adequate command of the foreign language, there is obviously no reason why they should not be set the exercise of translating into it; if they have not attained to this command, it is equally obvious that this form of translation would be out of place.

It is of course desirable that the work should be so organized and such a standard reached as to

render possible a little of both kinds of translation in the highest forms. The difficulty of such work ought, however, to be appreciated—as it was not by the eminent headmaster who wrote contemptuously to the *Times* that 'any fellow can translate into French if you give him a dictionary!' The truth is that to turn even the simplest piece of English into suitable French is one of the hardest tasks imaginable—as everybody knows, except those who do not know French! It is hard to understand how the practice of setting passages from Macaulay or Burke for translation by pupils who could scarcely have asked the way to the railway-station in the foreign language should ever have become a settled tradition. . . . The passages chosen should be simple; both the English and the French should be well within the grasp of the class. Translation, in fact, should be much more an exercise in style than in applied grammar.

CHAPTER VIII

LITERATURE

If literature has so far scarcely been mentioned, it is not because it is to be regarded as of little importance: on the contrary, it is in a sense the end and aim of all language teaching. Nor is it to be supposed that the study of literature is a matter to be attended to only when other aims have been realized, something to be superimposed on a careful linguistic foundation; it will begin to claim our attention from the choice of the first text to be read. The various aspects of language teaching—pronunciation, fluency of speech, orthography, grammar, dictation, composition, vocabulary, etc.—may, for the sake of convenience, have to be dealt with separately by the writer on method; but this does not mean that they can be kept separate in the practical work of the class-room: in reality, all these aims are to a large extent concurrent; progress in any one direction generally facilitates progress in every other direction: purity of pronunciation helps fluency of speech, fluency of speech helps composition, and progress in any one and every direction is helpful to the study of literature. The study of the language and of its

literature go on side by side. With a little careful choosing, almost everything read in class from the beginning may be literature.

Just as oral teaching has been accused of leading to a neglect of grammar, so it is tacitly assumed by many persons that it also involves a neglect of literature. This view is in itself surprising enough; it is, however, quite in keeping with our present system of education, which appears to aim at teaching both language and literature through the eye alone. We teach living languages as if they were dead, and we seek to bring our pupils to an appreciation of good literature without teaching them how to read it aloud! We teach them neither pronunciation nor elocution, and the very meaning of the word rhetoric is actually in danger of being forgotten. We have lost all sense of the importance of the living voice. To teach people to speak is considered a waste of time, and we rarely find anybody who can read aloud tolerably even in his own language. . . . And yet the poet who wrote the verses we seek to explain, chanted them to himself as he composed them. He repeated this line with irony, that with anger. Every rhythm, each varying effect of smoothness or harshness meant something to him. Are we to neglect all this? Can we hope to recapture the mood in which the lyric was written, if we do? Is not a large part of poetry in fact sound, music? How can we appreciate it through the eye alone? As well seek to appreciate a statue by the sense of touch! And what applies to poetry applies equally

to the appreciation of good prose. The idea that oral teaching should be harmful to the study of either language or literature could only occur to the minds of persons who have radically false notions about the nature of both. There is nothing more striking about modern language teaching than the fact that those methods which lead most directly to a practical command of the language are also precisely the methods which are most in keeping with the aims of real scholarship, whether in the direction of literature or philology. The study of language as living speech is so far from being in any way at variance with the study of literature that it is the best possible preparation for it. The notes of the voice are more important than footnotes, and by far the best commentary on any passage is to read it aloud with right expression.[1]

To bring our pupils to an appreciation of a foreign literature is really a very difficult, and, in fact, a stupendous task. In the deepest and widest sense it is scarcely possible of accomplishment at school at all; we can, however, make a beginning, and though we may sometimes be disappointed, we shall occasionally meet with unexpected success. The matter may be approached in two different ways: we may either note down what works we consider most worthy of being studied a[illegible] proceed to introduce our pupils to them; or, o[illegible]he other hand, we may approach the questio[illegible] from the

[1] Even when we read 'to ourselves,' the printed words are read as a series of sounds, the beauty of which depends on our own pronunciation.

point of view of the pupil, and ask ourselves what works he is likely to appreciate. The latter of these two plans is obviously the more advantageous. The pupil is, after all, an important factor in the problem. The teacher ought to have a good knowledge of the foreign literature, but it is essential for him at the same time to have a good knowledge of the mind of the pupil; and of the two kinds of knowledge, a pretty subtle acquaintance with 'the gleams and glooms that dart across the schoo boy's brain' is likely to be by no means the less valuable. For the schoolboy himself is really the centre of the problem. Our object is to get him to enjoy reading French books, and we shall scarcely succeed in doing this unless we look at the matter a little from his point of view. It is hardly reasonable to expect him to be enthusiastic about a kind of literature that he would not dream of reading in his own language. We must not aim too high at first. We must begin with what he likes, in order to lead him to what we think he ought to like. His taste has to be consulted—though it has also to be trained. But it should not be trained violently. Literary taste should be a natural growth. We must not be too exclusive in our choice of authors—we who have catholic enough tastes ourselves! If our pupils do not appreciate Bossuet, let us try to make them appreciate Daudet; if they cannot appreciate Daudet, let us even try Dumas. To establish the conviction that there are books in French worth reading at all is something. It is a beginning

— a foundation on which with care more can be built. Literary taste and discrimination must develop with years, and slowly. The most suitable atmosphere for it to develop in is one of sincerity.

Much may be done by means of a small library to encourage the habit of reading French books. Already in their third year, and sometimes in their second, boys take pretty readily to reading at home for their own amusement stories by Dumas, Erckmann-Chatrian, Daudet, About, Mérimée, etc. Many a time has a love for French literature begun with a delighted reading of *La Belle Nivernaise* or *Le Petit Chose*. Such reading should be done without a slavish use of the dictionary; the pupil must learn to walk alone. It would be a mistake, however, to *press* books on a form: the lending of them must be regarded as a privilege. If a few good stories are lent to the cleverest boys in the class, the fame of them will soon spread. . . .

This habit of independent reading, where it can be developed, renders possible a stricter treatment of more difficult works in class. For, however indulgent we may choose to be to the learner's youth and the crude tastes that may accompany it, strict teaching there must be in the end. The principles of literary art must be learnt, and the severity of its rules; the wide gulf that separates conception and execution must be in some degree realized. . . .

Some aspects of literature are universal, and the pupil will already in his English lessons have become familiar with such matters as the

figures of speech, the various kinds of style, the different literary *genres*, etc. English literature, however, is often badly taught, and it will be safer not to assume too much. The phonetic work done in the early stages will now be a great help to mastering the elements of metrics, a subject in which all children take a natural interest. Also the distinction between the languages of poetry and prose presents very little difficulty to pupils who have been taught orally, for, having been trained in the constant use of familiar words and expressions, the unfamiliar terms of poetry stand out, when they meet them, as something uncommon and remote. This is just what happens in learning their own language. Thus the word *Wald* will probably have been used hundreds of times before they meet *Hain*, and when they encounter the latter for the first time, it will almost certainly be in verse. They will therefore observe a natural distinction between them, whereas the pupil who first discovers them side by side in the pages of an English-German dictionary will be likely to use both indifferently. Similarly, acquaintance with the language of familiar speech will illuminate the full significance of a homely or vulgar expression. The advantages arising from a knowledge of the spoken tongue are in fact innumerable. . . .

The learner must be brought to see a piece of literature as a work of art. In the poem or essay, fable or play, he is reading he must appreciate the relation of each of the parts to the whole and to

each other; he must observe the development of the writer's thought and the literary devices by which he seeks to give expression to it. He must learn something of the magic of words, of the enduring power of felicitous phrases.

> Les dieux eux-mêmes meurent,
> Mais les vers souverains
> Demeurent
> Plus forts que les airains.

He must thrill at the beauty of a fine sonnet—the severe, chaste beauty contrived in a restricted medium. Every literary work read must be diligently and laboriously studied, both form and matter.[1]

To teach literature is difficult, some say impossible; to teach how to teach it is more difficult still. It is a matter in which we have much to learn from the French, whose method of *lecture expliquée* might well be adopted in this country, not only in dealing with French, but also with English literature. An excellent book on the subject is *Explication des Textes Français* by A. Dubrulle (Belin, Paris). By the study of this and similar works the teacher may attain to much skill in literary exposition; if, in addition, he has some real enthusiasm for the literature he is teaching, he can scarcely fail to achieve what is achievable, for enthusiasm is communicable.

In the teaching of ancient languages a fairly settled practice has been established, from which

[1] Buffon, *Sur le Style*, should be read by every Modern Sixth—or, still better, *learnt by heart*.

there is but little deviation, in regard to the authors to be read and the order in which they are to be read. If we find one boy reading Cæsar, another Livy, and a third Martial, we are not in much doubt as to their respective positions in the school. No such fixed tradition has yet arisen in connection with the study of French and German. The considerable extent of the modern literatures and the wide choice they present render them a perplexing problem to those persons who like definite programmes and a carefully planned curriculum. No doubt it is a matter into which a certain amount of organization and system require to be introduced; for too long French literature in English schools has consisted of *Le Roi des Montagnes* and *Colomba*, while German literature has fared scarcely better; yet it is a matter in regard to which the individual school and the individual teacher must always retain a large measure of freedom. This is scarcely the place to attempt to draw up elaborate programmes for the purpose—if elaborate programmes are at all desirable. It may be remarked, however, that for the person with a true appreciation of the foreign literature the problem very largely solves itself: he is not likely to leave La Fontaine and Molière out of his French course, or in German to neglect Schiller's ballads, Goethe's lyrics, or Lessing's prose.

CHAPTER IX

THE PLACE OF MODERN LANGUAGES IN A SYSTEM OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

THE most important subject in the curriculum of any English school should be English. It should be the central subject, to it most care should be devoted, and around it the others should be grouped. Just as French holds the place of honour in French schools, so English should hold the place of honour in English schools. It is a natural, common-sense principle, which would not require to be affirmed, were it not that we are so far from practising it. In an English secondary school the greater part of the time is at present devoted to the study of other languages, living and dead. This course appears to be defended on the ground that it is necessary for the pupils' linguistic and literary training. But it is not in the least necessary to go outside the limits of English for either purpose. We may begin to shake our heads over English as a means of linguistic education, when we have tried what may be done by systematic training in the practical use of it, both in speech and writing, and the intelligent study of its past and present; and as for the notion that English literature, with

its almost bewildering richness in works of every imaginable kind, is insufficient for the needs of the schoolboy, it is too absurd for words. It is customary to insist on the singular advantages of an acquaintance with this or that language and literature; nobody would deny it, not even of the humblest literature; but to argue in this manner is like pressing the attractions of mutton, venison, and veal on a man who is already quite adequately supplied with beef! The presence of so many foreign languages in our curriculum is not, however, due to any deliberate conviction that they were all necessary, though this argument may be used to defend the state of things which has actually arisen; it is in reality ascribable to a curious historical development. Our system of education has not been planned; it has grown.

Briefly the historical origin of our present practice is as follows. At the time of the Revival of Learning and the foundation of our Grammar Schools linguistic education—and indeed all education—was confined to the study of Latin and Greek. These two literatures were at the time taken as representing all available human knowledge. This tradition became very firmly fixed, and it has actually persisted down to quite recent times; many middle-aged men of the present day have been brought up exclusively—or at any rate with negligible deviations—on the ancient humanities. Nor have we any right to speak disrespectfully of this curriculum; it was no doubt in many respects superior to the rather

'snir -ety' education a boy runs the risk of receiving at the present day. With the passing centuries, however, many changes took place. Our own literature grew and developed in such a way as to become, in the opinion of many, the finest the world has ever seen. All over Europe other national literatures grew up, each of them interesting, and some of them at least comparable to our own. And at the same time the relations between the various European countries became more intimate; trade and other ties were developed; with rapid progress in locomotion, intercourse of every kind became more extensive, until we have been brought to feel that a knowledge of each country by the others, if not a positive necessity —as it sometimes is—is at least in all cases highly desirable. But to acquire a knowledge of a foreign country it is necessary to acquire a knowledge of its language.[1] As a result, people began to clamour to have modern languages—or at least French and German—taught in the schools. This demand

[1] I quote the following from *The Soul of Germany*, by Dr. T. F. A. Smith—one of the numerous books on Germany produced by the War. Speaking of the impossibility of arriving at a right understanding of a country without knowing its language thoroughly, he says: 'The writer lays the greatest emphasis on the language qualification. An observer who is not able to feel the slightest vibrations of the language—no matter what country he is studying—is labouring under a very real disability. Natives must not be conscious that a foreign element is in their midst, for that consciousness makes them no longer truly natural and themselves. After all, the language is the life-blood of national thought and motive, and only by knowing it and feeling it, so as to be able to identify himself with the nation, can the observer get to the heart of things.'

was unwillingly acceded to, and in course of time a place was found for them beside science, drawing, mathematics and all the other subjects that strive for place in the modern time-table. The new learning, however, was received rather coldly by the representatives of the old—which had in its turn once also been new. It suffered what all strangers suffer - suspicion and miscomprehension. Moreover, it was felt that four foreign languages constituted a rather large programme, even though two of them were only modern languages. Two modern languages, however scantily treated, might prove a considerable distraction from the more serious work of learning Latin and Greek. So a compromise was devised, and the 'modern side' was instituted. This, however, was not a complete solution of the question, for it was considered necessary to teach Latin on the modern side; and on the classical side French was taught—or, at any rate, was included in the curriculum.[1] So the average English schoolboy was left with a programme of three foreign languages.

In the writer's experience, three foreign languages are too much for the average boy. (See Chapter on 'What is Possible.') But even if this were not so, the large amount of time necessary for the study of them would still be unjustifiable, for it curtails

[1] Whatever may be the value of modern-side Latin, classical side French is almost invariably a sham. It is bad enough that a sham should exist in an institution which should be the enemy of shams—namely, the school; but the matter is even more serious; for to teach French badly is to make our pupils despise it, and, as a natural consequence, the people who speak it.

too severely the time at our disposal for the teaching of English, to which, as has already been stated, more attention should be paid than to any other subject.[1]

The absurdity of the notion that the English boy's education should be founded mainly on the study of foreign languages having been exposed, and the rightful and natural position of English in a system of national education indicated, we are now in a position to deal with the question, what part, if any, foreign languages should play in this system. With the question of Latin and Greek it is not the business of this book to deal. It is quite evident, however, that we experience an actual need for a knowledge of modern languages. This need, in fact, is so great that the neglect of it—and it has been neglected—is a source of national danger. It is quite certain that a knowledge of modern languages should be part of the equipment of the officers of our Army and Navy; of our statesmen and the members of our diplomatic services; and of merchants, scientists, and scholars. Nor is such knowledge without its use for the professional man, whom it may enable to keep in touch with the progress made in his calling in other countries. Indeed, it would be difficult to say to whom a knowledge of modern languages might not be useful in these days of extensive intercourse. There is no necessity, however, to exag-

[1] This once admitted, it follows that no English child should begin to learn a foreign language until his linguistic sense in regard to his own has been adequately developed.

gerate. It is clear that while a knowledge of at least French and German is a necessity to some members of the community, the consistent neglect of these languages by the rest is certain to prove in many unsuspected ways a source of national weakness. There is here sufficient argument for their inclusion in our system of secondary education.

But it will be objected that this is a purely utilitarian view. Willingly granted. Utilitarianism, rightly understood, is a most valuable principle in human life. This is not the place to expose the egregious fallacies underlying the attempt to set in opposition the ideal and utilitarian aspects of education. Suffice it to say that the usefulness of French and German is not a drawback. The penetrating beauty of Heine's sonnets to his mother, the exquisite gracefulness of Ronsard's *Sonnets pour Hélène*, can never be diminished by one iota by the fact that the languages in which these immortal things are written are at the same time of great practical utility. The value of modern languages as instruments of education depends on the way in which they are taught.

Assuming, then, that modern languages should be taught, the provision for the teaching of them is represented by the modern side.[1] The modern

[1] If I confine my remarks here to large public schools for boys, it is not that I am ignorant of, or undervalue, what is being done in other types of schools, but because I am convinced that from the point of view of national welfare a knowledge of modern languages is a far more urgent necessity for our ruling classes than for clerks or shopkeepers.

sides of our schools, however, have never flourished. For this there are many reasons. In the first place, when living languages were introduced into our schools, the same method of teaching was extended to them, by which it had been the long-established custom to teach Latin and Greek. In a word, they were taught as dead languages. In very many cases also those set to teach them were persons with no real knowledge of them, whose whole linguistic training had been acquired in the study of the ancient languages. It was considered that the traditional methods of teaching the latter were alone right, and that they might be applied indifferently to all other languages. This view had many very regrettable and some quite absurd consequences. The terminology in use for the inflexional languages was forced violently on the modern isolating languages, and wherever it was found difficult of application it was regarded as a clear proof of inferiority on the part of the latter! (This view has been once for all disposed of by Jespersen's *Progress in Language*.) It was not realized that languages presenting wide and striking differences of phenomena required corresponding difference of treatment and of terminology. Our own language has not been the least sufferer in this respect. To the present day the English schoolboy constantly confuses case-form and case-relation in English grammar - to mention only one complication. To such lengths has this been carried that it has actually amounted to changing the natural constructions of the English language

so as to make them more like Latin! Of this two examples will suffice. One is the rule so often given in teaching English composition that sentences should not be ended with prepositions. This is clearly traceable to the influence of Latin, and there is no other ground for it whatever. Another is the objection raised by some grammarians to the accusative after *than*, an objection which obviously has its origin in the efforts of the Latin master to restrain his pupils from using the accusative after *quam*! But if this construction is wrong, then neither Shakespeare nor Milton, Bolingbroke nor Swift, knew how to write English![1] (Compare also Prov. xxvii. 3: 'A stone is heavy, and the sand is weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.') Many more illustrations might be given of this absurd treatment of modern languages.[2] The independent, scientific study of them has been almost wholly neglected, except on the part of a few illustrious scholars, whose writings do not appear to have been read, or, if read, to have been very grossly misunderstood. Moreover, the under-

[1] 'I only once remember having found *than who*, namely in the sentence "Mr. Geo. Withers, than who no one has written more sensibly on this subject," and then it occurs in the book on *The King's English* (p. 338), by Mr. Washington Moon, who is constantly regulating his own and others' language by what in his view *ought* to be, rather than what really *is* the usage of the English nation.'—Jespersen, *Progress in Language*, p. 200.

[2] The cause appears to lie, at least partly, in the fallacious supposition that because modern and ancient languages are related *etymologically*, they must also be related *morphologically*. But, as Sweet is careful to point out, English is morphologically much more closely related to a language like Chinese than it is to Latin or Greek.

lying misconceptions in the province of theory led to wrong methods of teaching in practice; as a consequence the teaching was neither theoretically sound nor practically useful; the pupils gained neither a real command of the foreign language, nor a right comprehension of its phenomena. Teaching of this kind did not tend to make the modern side a success.

There was another great difficulty. Nearly all the scholarships at the universities were granted for proficiency in ancient languages. As a consequence, the bright boy who hoped to 'get on' by means of his brains, invariably joined the classical side. Also, since modern languages were supposed to be easier to learn than ancient, the duller boys were advised to join the modern side. The obvious result was that the modern side has been, on the one hand, reproached for not doing brilliant work, and, on the other, deprived of the material by which this could alone have been accomplished!

The work on the modern side has been complicated by a further circumstance, which is not undeserving of mention, seeing how much misunderstanding it has led to. It has been the custom of the teacher of the ancient classics to hold up the languages, peoples, and institutions of the ancient world for the almost undiscriminating admiration of his pupils. He has aimed in fact at turning young Englishmen into ancient Greeks. It has been unintelligently supposed that the teacher of French and German must necessarily

follow a similar aim—a notion which has caused modern languages to be regarded in certain quarters with something like suspicion. The modern teacher has, however, no such purpose. His attitude towards the foreign country is critical. True, it would be a strange country in which one could find nothing to praise. Even the fact that we are at present at war with Germany need not prevent us from admitting that her system of municipal government, for example, is very excellent. But our aim is not admiration, but *understanding*.

This brings me to my last point. It is clear that the teaching of modern languages is desirable. The first thing necessary is that we should at last take to teaching them efficiently; to this purpose it is hoped that this little book, of which now but few words remain to be written, may be a helpful contribution. I am convinced, however, that we shall get the best results from modern language teaching in our system of education, if it is combined with the teaching of modern history; and that we should study not modern history alone, but also the life and institutions of the foreign nation with whose language we are dealing. Our aim should, in fact, be to arrive at an accurate knowledge of the civilisation of modern Europe. We should study modern life as a whole, just as on the classical side the life of the ancient world is studied as a whole. If this plan were adopted—its adoption involves other changes[1]—we should

[1] See an article on this subject by the writer entitled 'The Unification of Modern Studies' in the *School World* for April, 1916

have a curriculum [1] which ought to ensure, amongst other things, in the first place a thorough study of our own language and literature; an intelligent comprehension of the growth of modern Europe; a real practical command of at least one foreign language, possibly of two; and lastly an acquaintance with Molière, and perhaps also with Goethe.

[1] An attempt to draw up a complete modern-side curriculum would clearly be beyond the scope of the present work, and the above remarks are, of course, not to be taken as exhaustive. There is no reason, for example, why a modern education should completely ignore the ancient world: translations from the Greek might very well be included as part of the English course. No modern curriculum of the kind indicated can, however, be worthily established in our schools, unless corresponding changes are made at the universities, where scholarships should be granted, not for history, foreign languages or English separately, but for a combination of these; such scholarships should, moreover, be considerably increased in number, so as to put the modern humanities on something like an equal footing with the ancient.

APPENDIX A

LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION AND NATIONALITY

After writing Chapter IV I referred to some of the problems considered in it in a letter to my friend Professor R. A. Williams. His reply—he seldom touches on such matters without illuminating them—is highly interesting, and the following quotation from it, which he has kindly given me permission to publish, deserves at least whatever permanence it may attain to in the pages of this book: 'You raise the question why different peoples express the same thing in different ways, apropos of examples like English *The girl is running downstairs* and French *La jeune fille descend l'escalier en courant*. I think the best answer can be given to this if we adopt Wundt's conception that speech is the analysis of thought and the expression of that analysis. The concept is the same in the above instances, but it is analysed differently. The French analysis is the more elaborate, we may say the more adequate, because it obviously has regard to the difference between running on the flat and running modified by the necessity of coming down from a height. Now language oscillates continually between two poles, one the tendency to be exhaustive, the other the tendency to be economic in expression. Generally speaking, the Englishman favours the latter alternative—he is quite ready to adopt an imperfect analysis which saves energy in expression, so long as by doing so he does not mislead the hearer. This is rough and ready and somewhat inartistic. The French expression as above has no practical advantages over the English, but it is on the whole more artistic because more adequate, more attentive to a fine distinction which the Englishman is not ignorant of, but is quite ready to ignore where it is not of practical importance. I think you are quite right in stating in your letter that the difference in such cases is not one of thought but merely of expression. The laws of thought are the same for all nations, but as

every concept, however simple, is complex in reality, its analysis, and therefore its expression, may vary quite considerably. The nations vary by having a different attitude to the importance of the various elements which are revealed by analysis, and to explain the variance we have to appeal to history. To take an example: the German is quite content with *Ich schrieb* where we say *I was writing*, not because he is ignorant of the difference between progressive action and other forms, but because, for reasons which, if at all, can only be revealed by history, he lays less emphasis on this 'progressiveness' as a general rule. The old way of looking at the complete sentence as the expression of a judgment does not help us at all. A judgment must be expressed by analysis, but it does not follow that every analysis is a judgment—in other words, a critical definition of a certain relationship between two or more elements. If the Frenchman says *J'ai faim* where the Englishman says *I'm hungry*, it only means that the Frenchman analyses a total concept into a *feeling* and its relationship to the feeler, while the Englishman analyses the same concept into a *state* in a similar relationship. But if we asked either for his judgment on the point, he would probably agree that hunger is both a feeling and a state. If one fixes his attention on the feeling and the other on the state aroused by it, that does not arise from a difference in judgment, but from a different attraction of the attention to different parts of what is a complex idea—namely, the idea of hunger. It arises therefore in this case from a difference in sensitiveness; the feeling is the important thing for the Frenchman, who is more emotional on the whole, while the Englishman more stoically glosses the feeling over. It is easy to see that in English to say *I have hunger* would be a little *outré*, it would sound rather wolfish to us. It would put the feeling of hunger in the same region of intensity as toothache, which would be hardly decent! It is interesting to note that even in English, when the feeling comes into prominence, the construction may approximate to the French. Thus the less self-contained Irishman is quite ready to make a statement like, '*I have a thirst* (cf. j'ai soif) *which I would not sell for fifty pounds.*'

APPENDIX B

SPEECH-LIFE

THE statement that language grows and develops by laws natural to itself, which are practically outside human control, will come as a surprise to the student who has been accustomed to think that it is, on the contrary, moulded by the human will. As the matter is of considerable interest, a few words may be added on the subject. I take the following passage from W. D. Whitney's *Life and Growth of Language*: 'It must be carefully noted, indeed, that the reach of phonetics, its power to penetrate to the heart of its facts and account for them, is only limited. There is always one element in linguistic change which refuses scientific treatment: namely, the action of the human will. The work is all done by human beings, adopting means to ends, under the impulse of motives and the guidance of habits which are the resultant of causes so multifarious and obscure that they elude recognition and defy estimate. . . . The real effective reason of a given phonetic change is that a community, which might have chosen otherwise, willed it to be thus; showing thereby the predominance of this or that one among the motives which a careful induction from the facts of universal language proves to govern men in this department of their action' (pp. 73–74). That an individual can to a limited extent change his own speech is undoubtedly true, but if he changes it beyond a certain point he will make himself incomprehensible to the society in which he lives, and even from comparatively slight changes he will be deterred by the formidable weapon of ridicule; but that any community as a whole ever carries out *consciously* any considerable changes in its speech there does not appear to be any proof. The whole question seems to me to be well summed up in the following extract from the letter referred to in Appendix A: 'But speech life, if I may so call it, *takes place mainly in*

the region of unconsciousness. Cumulative but at any given moment very small changes are made unconsciously but constantly and persistently. Conscious interference is on the whole spasmodic—an individual may voluntarily change a good deal in his natural speech habits, but he is not likely to have the power of changing them so beyond a certain degree, which in the main does not greatly affect the unconscious development as a whole. Such conscious changes, in so far as they are not restricted to single individuals, are in the main controlled, I believe, by fashion, and are not consequently very thorough-going, except perhaps when a local dialect falls into disrepute; but even then a d. [illegible] only dies out when the younger generation ceases to learn it. However, there is no doubt that a conscious regulation of our speech might become a much more thorough process if it were a properly cultivated element of education; it is, e.g., conceivable that the S.E. diphthongs [ou] and [ei] for [o:] and [e:] might, if desired, be wiped out by a co-operative effort; such an effort, however, is not very likely to be made under present circumstances. Possibly to be efficiently carried out it would require a parallel change in accent.'

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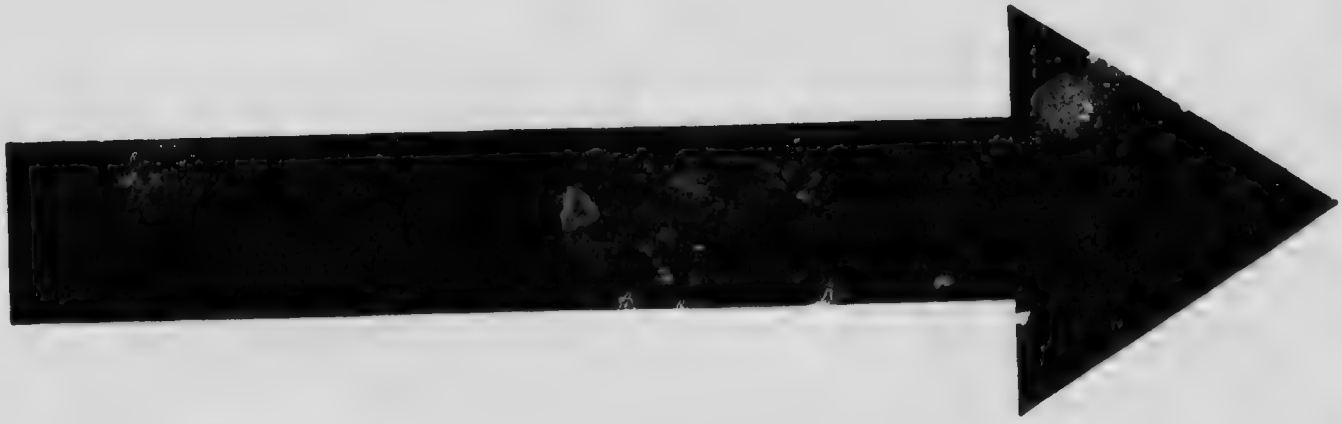

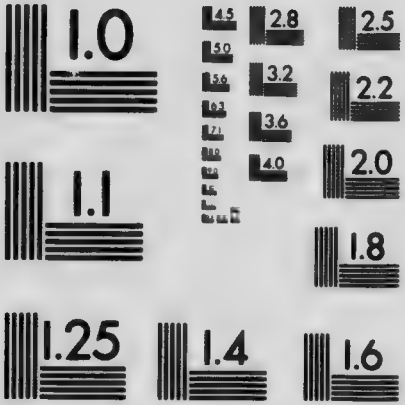

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